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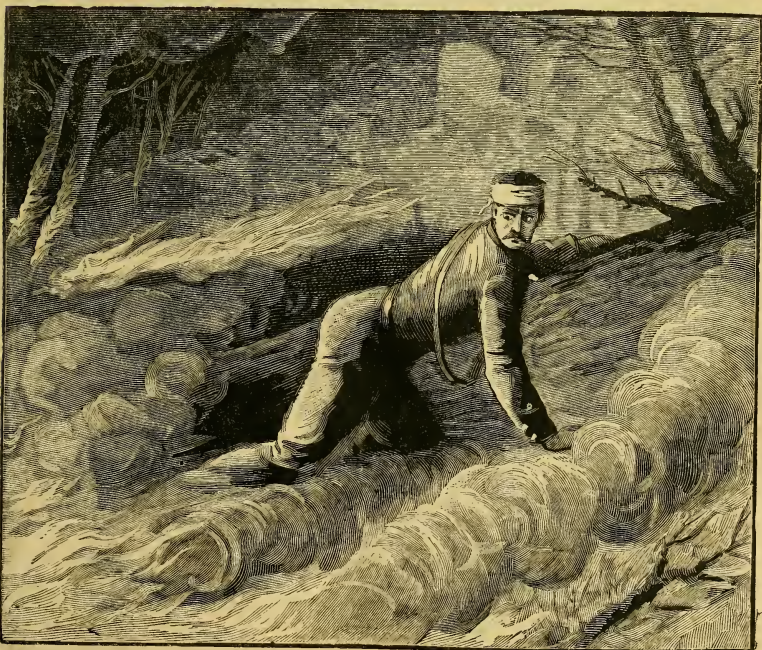
ORIGINAL STORIES OF ADVENTURE in the WAR for the UNION.

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BATTERY BOB; or, Crest and Plain at Fredericksburg

BY ANTHONY P. MORRIS.



Simmons, the Union scout, facing death among the flames at Fredericksburg.

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CHAPTER I.
"COBBS' REST."

We begin our narrative at a time shortly subsequent to the abortive attempt of the Confederate General Lee to invade the North by way of Harper's Ferry and the Antietam.

The reader of history will remember how General McClellan, in the fall of the army which his own hands and genius had fashioned, while not winning a positive victory over the hostile forces, at least checked the bold advance of the gray-clad host, and, finally, after one of the most bloody battles destined to figure in the after records of the war, drove his antagonist back over the gory ground into the hilly shelters of Virginia. Scarcely had the Federal commander of the Union troops accomplished this cheering object, when the following well-remembered dispatch was brought to him by General Buckingham, post-hast from Washington, and handed to him at Rectortown, while in pursuit of the flying enemy:

[General Orders, No. 132, of
WAR DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, D. C.,
September 25, 1862.]

By direction of the President of the United States it is ordered that Major-General McClellan be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac, and that Major-General Burnside take the command of that army. By order of the Secretary of War,
E. D. FOWLER,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

Quietly then in his tent the brave chief-tain of heroes turned over the leadership of his men to his successor in arms. Of the capacity of this successor to General McClellan, as regards his qualification for the responsibilities which so suddenly devolved upon him, his brief career, that day at Rectortown, sufficiently attested the acceptance of his resignation by President Lincoln, speaks plainly for itself.

The Confederate leader, Jackson, was in the Shenandoah Valley, and Longstreet was at Culpeper. The forces of Lee, after the havoc and retreat of the Antietam, were sadly divided; when suddenly the southern host found themselves "left alone," as it were, for the army of Burnside was hardly to be seen. Lee had to turn in surprise and go in search of the foe that had been pursuing him.

Having abandoned the well-laid plans of the commander, who had preceded him, Burnside was then making for Richmond by the line of Fredericksburg.

In pursuance of the orders from the new commander, Sumner's grand division was now in the north of the river, and the town of Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg, where a crossing of the Rappahannock was intended to be effected.

Ascertaining the movements of his foe, General Lee resolved to plant himself directly in his path and give stern battle; to further which, he soon had both Jackson and Longstreet marching swiftly toward the city by the river.

With these brief explanations in premise of the thrilling events to follow as an adjunct to the memorable campaign, we now proceed to the drama of persons whose adventures and plots will endeavor to escape the attention of the prosy historian in his search after more absolute facts.

Upon a gradual slope, amid the hills at the north of Falmouth, where it had been known, throughout a long period before the war, as "Cobbs' Rest,"

A very large and roomy building that had held many a Southern planter in previous years as his guest, and which had attained a popularity as a comfortable hiding place for the weary traveler.

Old Silas Cobbs had fairly grown up with the trees around the tavern that was now

A man of fully sixty years, with half bald pate and the unfortunate peculiarity of having only one natural leg—the other having been lost by an accident which had happened. Upon the remnant of the severed member he wore a wooden applier retained by straps and entirely exposed, disdaining, as he often remarked, to hide this misfortune in the wearing of an artificial leg.

For years he had been known as "one-legged Cobbs."

And Cobbs had been married in his time the fruits of which could be seen in one of

the loveliest girls that could be met with at that section.

Ethel Cobbs was a tall, dark-eyed, raven-haired beauty of elegant and—though appearing of even more womanly age—of fine figure and keen spirit.

Her fame for loveliness, and as the hostess of the old tavern was second to the notoriety of her father only, and pure as beautiful was she known to be.

But no guests stopped now at Cobbs' Rest, nor had they for many a day since the rumble of war rung up its sullen echoes on the soil.

Father and daughter were comparatively alone there, the old man being exempt, because of his infirmity, from serving in the army, and a cause that was dear to his heart.

On the morning of the seventeenth of November, 1862, Silas Cobbs was walking unaided to and fro across the ricketty porch of his tavern, his wooden stump thumping rapidly on the plank.

Alas his watery gray eyes roved afar to the north and along the line of railroad in the way of a man who momentarily expects to make a most unpleasant trip.

And anon he muttered an almost incoherent jumble of words about "Yankees," "invaders," "dogs in blue," etc.

In the midst of this, his daughter appeared in the porch doorway—and if the author has poorly attempted to describe this one who was a child of the hills, let it be added further that her position there at the moment was like the sudden apparition of a being, early, yet uncertainly, of exquisite contours, all radiance, all spirit that combined a natural gentleness, with eyes that beamed and seemed to hold in reserve a fire of passion or of quick resentment.

"Shall I bring your pipe, father?"

"No—no, my child—no. I can't smoke, even puff the old pipe. I can't help thinking, and—ah!—I can't help thinking."

By this way the dogs, the dogs in blue. And the thought that they will be swarming about here seems already to fill the air with a bad smell; yes a very bad smell for me, my child, for I hate you I hate I hate I hate Yankees, and the smell of beans—both smell alike to me. Umph! Bah! Ho! why didn't they choose some other direction? and the wooden stump thumped up and down on the porch, and his lips, and his white, raspy beard surrounding, spluttered in an ireful manner.

A minute's silence ensued. But in that brief space Ethel was thinking—

"He hates Yankees; and I love them—love one, at least, and to see whom at this moment I would willingly pay an price. Perhaps I shall see him soon, for I think he is with this army that the riders who passed here yesterday for Fredericksburg said was coming. I have prayed ever since the receipt of the news of the news of the news would be kind enough to let me feel once more the dear, true embrace of Robert Ross—"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the abrupt appearance of a small negro boy around one corner of the porch.

His black face was spread in a broad grin that showed nearly every white tooth in his head, and his eyes rolled up at him. "Hello, Massa Cobbs. Oh! yah—yah!"

Cobbs wheeled on him.

"Hello! what's the matter, you imp?"

"Oh! hi-yi!—and the datter, you imp, over your head, and you whistled with laughter."

Cobbs was in no mood for nonsense.

He thumped across the porch, and arriving within striking distance of the black, he reached to snare him with his knotty cane.

Agilely the little fellow avoided the stroke, crying:

"Don't welt me, Massa Cobbs—"

"What are you laughing at, you imp, I say?"

"Why, 'jes' de funnies' 'tween you ever seen. Oh, hi, 'mas' wai a hump on he's back."

Seemed like it growed dar 'n' no' (up) 'n' de man, dan de man bissett—yah, yah!"

"A man?—where?"

"Down dar by de well a helpin' of hisself to a drink."

And from the porch strode, or rather hobbled, the old man to obtain a view of a person who could excite so much mirth in the negro boy.

After him danced Col. still grinning, stopping to check the laughter which had so nearly brought down on his back a blow from the knotty cane.

As Silas turned the corner of the house, from the porch he had a fair view of the well with its huge balance pole, he paused, him-

self a little astonished by the kind of man he saw there deliberately drinking out of the great bucket in the absence of other convenience.

CHAPTER II.

A DISGUISED LOVER.

The individual at the well presented a rather nondescript appearance.

His clothes were of the shabbiest, in many places faded to the pale, dry patch; his pants of uncertain color were rumpled carelessly into the tops of a pair of high boots that seemed on the point of falling from his feet ere he could walk another step; his shirt, under a cap of half army pattern was loose at one side, and hung idly down over one eye that glittered brightly with the other over a pair of very red cheeks; but his coat did not partake so much of the aspect of poverty which was so striking to the observer.

Beneath the coat was a monstrous hump, and the back of the coat seemed to have been torn open in flaps, probably for the greater comfort of the hump, which was much larger than the humps usually seen in similar deformities.

When he had satisfied his thirst, the man who had eyed Cobbs over the rim of the bucket, exclaimed:

"Hullo!"

Cobbs saw in him only some wayfarer who had paid a penny in the world. More, he was inclined to believe him to be some vagabond who would not hesitate to rob the tavern in some way if permitted to loiter near.

"You yourself!" he returned, raspingly.

gruff. "Who are you?"

"Oh, I'm only a belated traveler."

"Belated—yes, I reckon so. Well, have you any more vodka?"

"Yes, and much obliged, if you're the boss. That's first-rate water in the well here."

He advanced toward Cobbs.

"Then if you've had your drink, be off."

"Be off?" half pausing in astonishment.

"That's what I said."

"But I want to stop right here."

"You've got to go, or you'll get your head broken."

"This is Cobbs' tavern, isn't it?"

"Yes; that's my name. But I don't want anybody sleeping about my stable and barn, and I won't have it."

"Sile and I," broke in the hump-backed traveler. "Why, what are you talking about. I never thought of sleeping in a barn in my life."

"You didn't. You've been accustomed to the best the hotels can afford. I reckon, haven't you?" half sneered the inn-keeper.

"Well, yes, when they had it to offer a man. I heard that you kept a good place for a while, and as you haven't moved since I suppose you've got all the old accommodations, haven't you?"

Cobbs eyed the man reflectively.

Had his watery orbs been capable of a little keener discernment, he would have discovered that the redness on the upper portion of the man's cheeks was paint, an artful make up of a disguise of some sort.

"Sile and I," broke in the very hump upon his back is a part.

"See here, have you got any money?"

"Money! why, I'm just loaded down with it. Look at that," displaying a bright ten dollar note.

"Did you think I was going to stop at Cobbs' Rest, an' no money to pay for it?"

"If you did, you were mistaken, that's all. I can't see that quick rejoiner, though his tone moderated somewhat as he perceived that this strangely attired personage was prepared to pay for the accommodations of the inn."

And he added:

"Come if you're going to make a stop with me, come this way. I haven't had much business since the war, and what's more, I don't care."

Notwithstanding he had seen the ready money for such hospitalities as his house could extend, he seemed to dislike to admit the comer therein, as if he was not with the two came and ascended the porch where she was still standing.

"Ethel, see that a room is prepared for the comer, and that you attend to it, but do not forget his old-time custom of address—"

"This gentleman. Come into my office, sir, and put your name down."

The office was a dingy apartment that was more like a stable than anything else, and had it not been for Ethel's constant attention to the old house, this apartment

especially would have lapsed into a sad condition.

The low windows did not admit sufficient light for a person to write with any kind of satisfaction, and Cobbs proceeded to light a candle when he had stepped behind the counter, which he held forward with one hand, while he shoved a monstrous book out to the edge where there was a rusty pen and an almost dry inkstand.

Without a word further, the traveler wrote his name:

"SAM HONDTCH (At Large).

"At Large," read Cobbs aloud, as he glanced at the scraggly autograph. "What he dogs do you mean by that 'At Large'?"

"Why, I represent two or three dwelling places, and as I love every spot of my childhood, and I got tired, some time ago picking out which one I'd love the best and claim for a home, don't you see? So I just put it down 'At Large.' It doesn't make any difference which one came from, anyhow, so long as I pay my bill in advance, does it?"

"No—all right. In advance—yes, I always require payment in advance from strangers."

"And while he was rubbing his fingers over the counter, the man, he asked:

"How long will you stay?"

"May be a week."

"Pervisions is scarce just about now, with be drain on the country for army supplies, for a week isn't what they used to be."

"Oh, that's all right. Here's an eagle. Will that pay for it? Or, if you want more, say so."

"Just then Ethel entered. The gentleman's room is already reserved, father."

The eyes of the solitary guest were fixed steadily on the girl; then, they suddenly opened wide through the window that commanded the bend in the road that wound before the hostelry.

He saw approaching several horsemen who were at a galloping pace and in disordered ranks.

All wore suits of gray. Instantly he said to Ethel:

"I'll go right up, miss, and much obliged to you for coming toward her."

"Hold on," said Cobbs. "Board ain't so such as all that, in good gold, too. I'm 'nly chargin' eight dollars—"

"Never mind; give me the change some other time. Will you show me where my room is, miss?"

"Follow me, sir."

She led the way to an apartment in the upper story where the bed, with its snowy coverlet, forming a striking contrast to the long unattended walls.

"This is it. I hope you will be comfortable, sir—"

The room was checked most singularly, and it was that would have applied almost any young girl but this child of the hills.

Sam Honditch glanced along the semicircular corridor, to make sure that no others were present there.

Then he threw both arms around the girl in a tight embrace.

For an instant she was astounded to speechless.

In another moment it would have gone hard with the man, for with a rapid movement she drew a revolver from her bosom and had it pressed against his face, the hammer clanking.

Her dark eyes flashed.

There was that in the fire of her glance that told she felt no fear, neither did she seem it necessary to call for help.

"Is that 'Honditch' the name that had meant harm to her, he was promptly balked, and instead, his life was at her mercy.

Coolly she said:

"Remember, you, arms, sir. Hesitate one second, and you die."

"Ethel!"

A change came over her features. Into the flashing eyes drew a look of puzzled inquiry.

"Ethel!" he repeated.

Then the weapon was lowered from his face, and she exclaimed, in an impetuous tone:

"Robert! can this be you?"

"I, darling, Ah, you did not forget my name, though even your dear eyes could not pierce this disguise. One kiss, love, and I will be still stood, gazing searchingly.

And then the disguised face of the girl, who had been in her thoughts so short-ly before, he leaned and folded her to him, kissing the red lips that were not averted from him.

"Put away that you disguised?" she asked. "You ask that, when you know I belong to the Yankee army, and am in the enemy's country? Ay, I am even now pursued."

Listed do not hear those horsehoofs sounding out in the road?"

"Yes."

"The riders are coming here, I think. They are in pursuit of me. I have been into Frederickburg, and just as I was leaving to bear important information to Burnside, I was discovered; the pursuit has been hot. I came on horseback—the animal is tied in a safe place down the hill. When I found myself so close to my darling, I could not resist the impulse to come and see you."

"And perhaps place yourself in a predicament that may result in your death," she broke in, quickly, as the sound of the approaching riders grew louder without.

CHAPTER III.

HOUNDING DOWN A SPY.

Robert Ross and Ethel Cobbs had met at a time when the former was a guest of the old tavern keeper, and an acquaintance formed then, and renewed afterwards, during the stay there until at last he had honorably won the affection of the girl.

To have made Silas Cobbs aware of the circumstance of their love, however, would have been a seriously, perhaps, a fatal step, as Ethel had said he would surely send her away beyond all possibility of the lover finding her, so adverse was he to young people loving, and she was then, in his opinion, far too young to entertain any such ideas.

Hence, with mutual vows of fealty, they separated, with the understanding that Robert should return soon again, prepared to marry her, and her home to one which he would provide in the North.

The breaking out of the war had prevented the carrying out of this secret plan; she had not seen him since that time of his departure, which was shortly previous to the vote of Virginia which placed her with the seceding states.

He had managed, however, to communicate with her occasionally, and by this means she had learned that he was with the army of the North, though he had not stated in what rank or capacity.

It was no wonder, then, that she could not see beneath this disguise the form of the man who held the best of her pure affection and troth.

The voice, though, she could never forget. No time was there for the outburst of mutual rapture which would have naturally ensued under other circumstances than those which now surrounded the pair.

Robert had said that he was pursued; even then his pursuers were thundering forward, and he toward the safety of the hills, they knew their quarry was actually there.

Her first thought was for his safety.

With one hand on his arm, and dark eyes turned toward the broad staircase, as if expecting to see the Confederate soldiers ascending to seize their prey, she half gasped:

"If you are pursued, Robert, you must flee. Do not stop in this place another minute. I have not time now to even surmise the meaning of the words you have just said, to ask why you are playing a part as a spy, one so brave as yourself and better fitted to lead brave men on a battlefield. You must flee, and without a moment's delay."

My father is one of the hottest Southerners and haters of Yankees in this section, and would give you over to them with a positive glee in his heart. Come this way; there is a rear passage from the inn—"

He interrupted as she made to lead him away along the entry.

"Wait a minute, Ethel. It is not my intention to flee at all. I am as safe here as anywhere. The parker's men have not yet arrived. Go! Do not linger here with me. I can take care of myself. And later I may be able to see and talk further with you. One kiss, darling—there. Now go, and do not have any apprehensions for my safety."

He imprinted a kiss on the lips of the girl and then fairly forced her to leave him, while he turned into the room, closing the door after him.

As the girl descended the stairs there was a great racket below the tavern.

With sundry shouts and a jangle of spurs and sabers, the party of horsemen drew up the porch, where the old Silas stood ready to welcome these soldiers in gray upon whom he looked with pride.

"Welcome, gentlemen, welcome!" he cried. "Come in, all. I am glad to see you."

"Hullo, Silas!" saluted the leader of the riders, advancing.

"Oh, glad to see you, Lieutenant Bolt. Come in."

"Yes, and my men here, too. We're about starved out just now and want something to eat. And while you are having that made ready step aside with me, Silas, for I've something to say to you."

"Yes, lieutenant. In a minute."

Cobbs hobbled away to give the necessary orders for refreshments and returned presently to the office bar, where the cavalrymen were making enough noise to resemble some belated crew on a rampage.

Setting before them a demijohn and glasses, Cobbs then beckoned to the lieutenant, and the two withdrew to the entry.

The detachment was composed of the Fifteenth Virginia cavalry under the command of the Confederate Colonel Ball, then in Frederickburg.

And this lieutenant, Rory Bolt, was somewhat of a curiosity.

A man of gigantic build, and having a voice that seemed to issue from his very bowels when he spoke; his keen eyes overcast by drooping shabby brows, and a nose protruding far beyond the forehead, waxed mustache in a point that seemed about to poke and pry into everything, at any time, at all hazard.

A word with you, Silas," he said, in his deep tone, with a mysterious motion of one of his immense hands.

"What is it, lieutenant? Oh, anything to oblige you."

"We are after a Yank," continued the giant, keenly eyeing the old man. "We chased him out of Frederickburg, where he has been playing the spy a little too successfully I am afraid. Now, then, have you seen anybody who looks suspicious around here, for we tracked him to the very foot of the slope leading up to your tavern."

Instantly into the mind of Cobbs came the recollection of his strange guest up stairs.

But before he could say anything in answer to the lieutenant's inquiry, the latter added further:

"A Yankee spy. And look you, a most extraordinary fellow. He first showed himself at the door of the inn, dressed in a blue and, blast him! made some of the boys think he was the very devil himself let loose to whip a whole army unaided! At least so I have heard, but I was not there. Had I been there, I would have shot the fellow with my own hands, and I would have secured a whole company out of their wits and kill them like a man knocking down tin-pins."

A remarkable Yankee, I say, Silas. A traveling battery! for he turns into a Gatling gun at will, and puff! down go all who stand before him. But I shall stand before him, and I shall not go down, he sure of that. Ho! Rory Bolt does not go down before any one man. But tell me, have you seen anybody—"

"Aha—aha! my dear lieutenant, yes, I have seen somebody. Oh, I think I have seen the very man you want. What does he look like, eh?"

"Blow me! I, nor anyone else cannot do that with certainty. But you may have noticed, if it is indeed the man you have seen, that he has a hump—"

"A hump? A hump?" eagerly broke in Cobbs.

"Yes, a hump. And it is that same hump, say the boys, which raises all the Cain among those who have attempted his capture. But I can get at the man, blast his hump and all! I'll put a bullet into his back and he will think his ankles are whipped off to the bone. Come, where is he, if it is the one you suppose we are after."

"Hush!" admonished the tavern-keeper, glancing around toward the stairs. "Make no noise. This thing must be done quietly, or he may escape you."

"He is now in the house!" exclaimed the perturbed lieutenant, with almost wolfish eagerness.

"Yes, but—"

Rory Bolt did not wait to hear more. Neither did he regard Cobbs' suggestion to proceed cautiously.

Wheeling, he strode into the room where his noisy men were discussing the demijohn.

In the same moment Ethel, out of sight at the turn of the stairs on the first landing, pressed one hand to her bosom and murmured:

"Ah, if Robert falls into the clutches of this man, Rory Bolt, he must be doomed, no matter how brave he may be. I must warn him again."

With the thought, she turned to hasten toward the room where she had left her lover.

"Robesley! Ho, where is Robesley?" Silence fell.

The men exchanged glances. Robesley was a cruelly stricken down by the flat of this giant lieutenant's saber in the upper corridor of the inn.

"Where is Robesley?" demanded Bolt again.

"Back in the tavern, I guess."

"Was it Robesley who dared to give me, his officer, a piece of advice? I didn't notice particularly who it was."

"Yes. Let him lay there. Good riddance if he never survives the blow I dealt him. I am chief, and he is under my command. I will be hard with those who attempt to forget it. By lightning! look at that dog."

Cobbs had emerged from the stable with the hound, which he was restraining with difficulty at the end of a long leash of stout hide.

At the same time, he was busy enough trying to quiet the beast by gentle words; for Durga, and evidently best contented, as he was half wild to regain his liberty of exercise.

No one who had ever worked about the tavern had been able to approach Durga; none had even dared to venture close enough to toss to him his daily allowance of food, for on such occasions the brute would become so savage and make such desperate efforts to break his confining leash, that he caused a terror to strike into the heart of the beholder.

As he approached under the control of the inn-keeper, the only person whose command he would obey since his puppyhood, his massive frame, his sleek hair, his great head with the bulging eyes and jaws that yawned to display the red tongue and horrible white and black teeth, Lieutenant Bolt could not avoid the exclamation:

"By lightning, look at that dog!"

The men did look, and though they were possessed of considerable courage, and the unusual circumstances of meeting a human foe, all shrunk a little further away from their officer, toward whom Cobbs was directly approaching.

A formidable and awful antagonist indeed, would have proved it lost to the trail of belated Battery Boh.

"Here he is—here he is!" said Cobbs, with an enthusiasm of pride over the possession of so admirably terrible a pet. "Let me tell you, Lieutenant Bolt, my Durga has already learned to distinguish the smell of a Yankee brogan; so there will be no difficulty in getting on his trail."

"Then that's what I call blasted good luck," commented Bolt.

But he added, as Cobbs came nearer:

"I have a care, Silas! Not too close with that beast, I say. I have no desire for a nip from those big jaws."

"Oh, have no fear, have no fear," raspingly piped Cobbs, with an accompanying chuckle, as he perceived that even huge and daredevil Lieutenant Bolt stood in awe of the hound. "Have no fear. He would do no harm while I am present unless I positively tell him to."

"Not so close, I say," half-shouted Bolt, as Cobbs continued to advance toward him.

"But there is no danger, I tell you, man. All bodies, to be of service to us, I must let him entirely on his own."

"You will swear that there is no danger?"

"Why, yes. Ha, ha! not the least bit in the world, my good lieutenant. Now, then, stand aside from that spot, under the shed, while I set him on the scent. You will find that I am right; he can take up the trail of a Yankee brogan as easily as he can run a nigger from the hole of a stockade. All Yankees and brogans smell alike, you know, in their army."

The cavalrymen proceeded to give a wide berth to the spot near the shed and in a blue cloud of dust the hound and the Unionist was supposed to have descended.

There was some murmuring among them, not loud enough to reach the ears of Lieutenant Bolt, however; and all were of the same willing mind to leave it to the Yankee free sooner than take themselves the chances of having Durga's great jaws close on their own flesh, as they apprehended might be the case at that moment he was free from the detaining hand of his master, the inn-keeper.

"Keep out of his way," said Cobbs, as he saw the dog's head and the collar of the beast, and bobbed forward, coaxing his ferocious pet to follow him.

Under the eave of the shed, Durga was

soon made to understand what was expected of him.

Within a few seconds the dog began circling around and about with his nose alternately skimming along the ground and elevated sufficiently in the air.

Then he performed something that sent a cold shiver down the spine of the soul of the cavalrymen, not excepting Lieutenant Bolt.

By swift bounds he came toward the men and ran in a line of scent, his nose fairly tipping the toes of each.

Cobbs raised one hand warningly in a way that said:

"Do not move; make no sound, or you may annoy his method."

The ordeal was past in a few seconds more, and Durga ran bounding back to the spot near the shed.

Presently a sharp, cutting yell broke from the beast, and so sudden was it that all were startled as much as they would have been had a gun from a Federal battery exploded in their midst.

Now Cobbs shouted:

"He has it! He has it, lieutenant. Mount your horses! Mount and follow him. Have no fears. He will find the Yankees, and if you make haste, you may be in time to see him riven into blue shreds. Mount! He has seen you with me, and you are intelligent enough to know that you are in pursuit of the one he is trailing. He will do none of you any harm."

"Come on," commanded Bolt, hurrying toward the horses that were halted to the left and at the front of the tavern.

The bloodhound could be heard as it sped on the track of the hunted man, up the slope to the crest towering above the little branch making in from the Rappahannock close to Cobbs' tent.

But just as the Confederates were mounting, and while a savage jubilation was manifested in Bolt's face and actions, something transpired to divert the attention of all from the distant baying hound.

"Lieutenant! look a there!" burst from one of the men.

"What is it?—at what? Come on. After the Yank. I want to be in time to see him riven into shreds, as old Silas says—"

"But look—look! The Yankies are coming! They are almost on us!"

And now others of the troop took up the cry:

"There they are!"

Bolt turned in his saddle, reins in hand, to see what caused the commotion among his fellows.

And not a little surprise held him speechless for an instant, as he gazed down the road and saw the Yankies.

Coming steadily forward were columns of blue soldiery.

There were no sounds of drums or other instruments to indicate their approach.

Onward they came, with flying colors that even under the shelter of the hills found enough of draught to unfurl them and reveal the stars and stripes.

By lightning! started from his astonished lips.

Then one and all—seemingly to utterly forget that they were in pursuit of the Yankee—turned their eyes and ears to the oncoming horses and dashed off in the direction of Falmouth.

The bloodhound was following the trail along the ground, baying, baying, baying, baying, warning the fugitive that he must halt and fight for his life.

CHAPTER VI.

A HOT RECEPTION.

It was no small body of men in blue that had thus frightened off the cavalrymen from the trail of the Yankies.

The Union army was fast drawing near to Fredericksburg.

This body of troops, this winding, trampading column, grinning with bare arms and the ranks the stars and stripes, was the van of Sumner's grand division then pressing swiftly on to Falmouth.

By different routes, converging, they came, in long and winding columns with flaunting standards.

To the right and to the left of the slope, where other facilities offered for the steady advance of the ranks, the men suddenly seemed to swarm with figures wearing blue uniforms and whose polished muskets gleamed from afar like some artificial sunlight, and whose bayonets shone like

The road to Falmouth was fast filling with the oncoming ranks, and the road to Falmouth, below the elevated position of Cobbs'

Rest, was being torn by the galloping hoofs of more than one rider who, from the recesses in the forest, was carrying tidings to the people that the Yankee army was close at hand.

None swifter of all these riders than the troopers who followed Lieutenant Bolt—followed him, it was said, as he was foremost in leading to danger, he was as well foremost in fleeing from it now.

"Hurry, there! Spur and voice! Come on!" he vociferated to his men. "The Yanks are truly upon us, and there will be hot work shortly at Fredericksburg, I imagine. Forward!"

At the same time and at an angle which, while it was toward the advancing lines of the Federals, was also at an acute angle away from them, far away on the top of the hill that towered above the little stream, swiftly sped the disguised Rebel Ross.

Not so far had he gone, though, as to be beyond hearing of that ominous sound in his rear which told that there was a bloodhound on his track.

He had escaped from the inn in the manner suspected by the Confederate cavalrymen, after having so mysteriously, without any explanation, taken a weapon, and leaving wounds or death, severe as his would-be captors.

For some reason he abandoned his intention of remaining in the tavern despite the danger and the possibility of being captured.

And as he hurried onward, more than once he placed his hand against his breast as if to feel of something there for the safety of which he was anxious.

"I was foolish," he muttered, "to think of remaining there, when I have so much here that is important to the Union army. I must make that first start, Silas, and I can see Ethel, can't I? Who can tell? For there will be a bloody battle fought here shortly, and I am but mortal. I shall beat my pest, and only God knows whether I shall live to see Ethel or anyone else of all for whom I entertain affection. Yes, the dispatches first, then Ethel. Ah, bark! That is the bay of a bloodhound. Is such a beast so my track, and I shall find him fast on several bloodhounds when I was there in the old time."

For a few seconds he paused to listen.

The increased baying of the bloodhound's tongue soon convinced him that he must be the object of the thirsty pursuit.

This realization, however, did not appear to cause him either surprise or anxiety.

Instead of the bloodhound's baying continually slackened his gait, and with occasional inquiring glances back over his shoulder, continued in the pathless course he was following toward the hills.

Nearer and nearer came the sound of the trailing hound.

"I guess I shall have a sight of him pretty soon now, I think, though, half pausing beside a fallen piece of timber, he will listen and am greatly mistaken, now that I listen a little closer, that is the note of the same hound, which old Silas Cobbs showed me at the time when I was a guest at his hotel. I know that Durga—if that is Durga—is a terrible antagonist; but I also know that unless Durga is bullet proof, I can make it pretty lively for the Yankies, and I shall find him in the flesh of Robert Ross. Come on, Durga!"

Nearer the hound.

Ross perceived a rather singular motion. Instead of standing to face the monster that was assuredly coming to give him fierce battle, he knelt there by the fallen tree and turned his back toward the source of the warning note.

On came the ferocious Durga.

The hound could now be seen bounding in gigantic stretches through the leafless timber, his red and white stripes showing forth a renewed sound of eagerness and triumph as he sighted his quarry kneeling there, apparently halted in combined fatigue, despair and terror.

Another moment, then the beast fairly arose from the earth to hurl itself upon the treed prey.

But in midair, as it were, Durga met with a reception that was astonishing and terrible.

There was a grinding, whirling sound about the person of the waiting man.

Without a moment's pause, out from his back seemed to pour a hail of small slugs that showered straight upon the savage animal.

Like a deadly blast it was; and Durga changed his note for one of howling that awoke the utmost echoes of the spot.

Down to the earth he came—down in a

heap, rolling over and over, then gaining his limbs and staggering about in a way almost human in its drunken exhibition of force. His fore paws fairly tore and dug at his nozzle, as if to brush away something that caused him excruciating misery.

Ross arose and stood calmly watching the brute.

"I guess that will settle his propensity for following a trail," he thought, though careful not to utter the thought aloud.

And while the dog thus lurched around, seeming to have forgotten or lost his intended victim, a form stepped out from behind a tree that was in the rear of Ross and unperceived by him.

A small, slim individual wearing a blue blouse that was strapped in tight at the waist by a belt containing a pair of revolvers and a long knife.

He carried a rifle of remarkably long barrel, and evidently not of government make; and on the muzzle of this he leaned, contemplating Ross with a pair of keen eyes from beneath the rim of an army hat having a great, flapping feather.

"That was neatly done, Battery Bob."

Ross wheeled upon the speaker, and this time his hand caught a revolver that was concealed in his bosom.

"Who are you?"

"I'm Simmons, the scout. Ever heard of me? I guess I know you, though perhaps I wouldn't if I hadn't seen that little performance of yours. If you don't like the way you treat the rebels when they get too close, I don't wonder that the men in the army call you Battery Bob. I'd like to have just a little of such fun myself sometimes. Snake!"

"You had immediately advanced. For he recognized at once by the namespoken, one of the most famous scouts that had figured with the army since its march from Fredericksburg under McClanahan. And by the address, it was apparent that the singular fame of a man known as Battery Bob was not unknown to him.

The two shook hands cordially.

"Where from?" the scout innocently asked.

"Just out of a gullet at Fredericksburg, where I was sent almost on the very day that Burnside took command. And I believe that what I have learned, and what I will be expected to secure it. Have you been constantly with the army since the commencement of the march from Warren-town?"

"Yes, and on, yes."

"And is Burnside still of the mind that he can take Fredericksburg?"

"Well, he just is. And what's to hinder."

"How far forward have you been?"

"Only right here where you see me."

"And I, as I say, have only been a few hours out of Fredericksburg. Burnside has made a mistake. He cannot take Fredericksburg."

"I hold a different opinion. Sumner is at this moment almost at Falmouth—that is how I happen to be scouting off here. The Rappahannock will be easily crossed at once, and the chances are that even before the rest of the army comes up, Sumner alone will have occupied the city."

"Simmons, we are brother scouts," said Ross suddenly.

"Yes."

"If I place in your hands something of the greatest importance for Burnside, will you take it to him immediately?"

"Yes. But what about yourself? Where are you going?"

"Back to the city."

"Yes."

"Yes. I can still be of service, if you will cooperate with me. Will you meet me on Beck's Island to-morrow night? I may have news of note for you to take in."

"Be there. But of course," more cunning than I would, I can tell you."

"Never mind. Now hasten in. Here," handing over a small package of papers to the scout in whose integrity he well knew he could rely.

Scarcely had the transfer been made when there was a startling interruption to this little meeting in the woody crests.

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAIL OF BLOOD.

Scout from the trail in front of the two scouts suddenly dashed no less than a score of Confederate infantry, some with muskets lowered to a charge and others pausing, after a few steps, to level their cocked weapons upon the pair who were plainly to them Yankees.

Out with a dash and chorusing yell, and

forward as if the capture of the two was a foregone conclusion.

"Surrender, you Yanks!"

And a dozen at once:

"Surrender, or we'll blow you full of holes!"

But the Confederates had expected to appall the couple by this sudden attack and the force of such superior numbers, they saw their mistake in less than two seconds from the utterance of their angry shouts. In the confusion, Simmons and Ross whisked out of sight behind convenient trees, and just in time to save their lives, probably, for simultaneously the firing came, the bang of muskets and the zipping tear of bullets in the bark and bush around them.

Like an echo spoke the long rifle of Simmons from his shelter, and with so many available and easy marks, it was not astonishing that upon the crack of his rifle one of the Johnnies threw up his hands with a piercing shriek and another leaped high in the air, falling and rolling on the ground from a wound inflicted by the bullet after it had passed clean through the body of the first man.

But the Confederates still came on with a rush.

Battery Bob had not replied to their fire with his revolver. He was busy instantly in another way.

Reaching behind him, under the artificial hummock he had made, he grasped from a bag which he carried there, a handful of revolver slugs and buckshot.

Throwing up the flap before mentioned as a peculiarity of the coat he wore, he poured the handful into a funnel-like contrivance which was strapped to his back, then laid hold upon a small crank beneath the funnel.

But a few feet past the shelter of the Union scouts.

Ere those few feet were passed over, the revolvers of Simmons began to bark, and his aim with these was as deadly as with his long rifle, for several of the Confederates pitched headlong forward almost at the feet of the brave fellow who so coolly met them.

But while he fired, and unable to glance toward Battery Bob to see how he was using the contrivance, so busy was he with the yelling enemy who seemed destined to triumph because of their superior numbers, he thought, in surprise:

"What must that Battery Bob, as I suppose him to be, what the deuce can he be mither with him? Why doesn't he help me here, with these buttertuns?"

At the very instant when it seemed that the two would surely fall captive to the graycoats, a remarkable scene occurred.

Out from behind the tree leaped Ross.

That ominous hump was turned toward the Confederates.

The came that whirling, grinding sound, and the assailants found themselves in the midst of a leaden hail that inflicted painful, and in some instances deadly, wounds in body and face.

The foremost halted in dismay, some clapping their hands to their faces, on which were bloody marks, and two or three sinking down out of the fight.

A man in the rear uttered a cry that told how swiftly southward had traveled the fame of this remarkable fighter.

"Battery Bob! Look out, or you'll be killed, you mother's son of you. It's Battery Bob!"

Though this announcement was a mystery to the majority, those who did comprehend it, influenced by their immediate action, the action of the remainder.

All turned and fled precipitately, scattering hither and thither, though there was no further demonstration upon them. The man who uttered the cry, "Fusillade Ho!" shouted Simmons. "Battery Bob, you are a battery, sure. Give me your hand. That machine of yours is just the consoonest beauty I ever saw. The Confederates who had fallen under his novel battery and the shots of Simmons.

All were dead.

And he knew when he looked into the face of several, just how many lives he had stricken out with the discharge of his wonderful machine.

Some of the dead had both, some one, of their eyes shot out by the tiny slugs that had penetrated to the brain.

"Now then," he said, returning to Simmons, who was reloading his rifle. "Make haste to the quarters, and get the dispatches, have given you. Good-by."

"And good luck to you," broke in Simmons, who had become, in that short ac-

quiescence, a great admirer of the man called Battery Bob.

And he added:

"I won't forget. You may expect to find me at Beck's Island to-morrow night, if I am still alive."

The tall scout stalked away through the woods, pausing once for a final wave of his hat.

Ross stood looking after him until he was lost to view.

"Now then," he muttered, "back to Fredericksburg. I would like to chauce another visit to the inn and see Ethel. But if Sumner is spending near Falmouth, as Simmons says, might not someone among the army looking for me, perhaps, with a dispatch assailing me to some other field of scouting. I do not want that to occur just yet. I know I can be of more service in the city, than which Lee is fast massing his troops to meet the tardy Burnside."

Giving a hial glance around him, to be sure that he was unobserved, he advanced to the log cabin, where he have seen him kneel to meet the onset of Durga, and stoop at one end of it.

He had previously observed that this log, old and decayed, contained quite a large cavity at one end.

"A very good place, I think," he uttered aloud, musingly. "I'll venture it, anyhow."

He removed his outer garments, thrusting them one after another into the log, and then he took out the singular contrivance which he wore strapped to his back, and placed it with the clothes.

From a pocket he produced a small vial and uncorked it.

With the contents of the vial, he bathed his face, and the paint which had given him the artificial ruddiness disappeared.

From another pocket he drew forth a soft hat.

By the removal of the garments which he wore when first introduced to the reader, and by the fact of another suit which he wore under the former, Robert Ross presented an appearance still more perfect of a recluse of a clergyman, with clean white and standing collar, with choker, and a glossy suit of plain black.

A pair of spectacles completed this transformation.

Pausing to assure himself that his trusty revolver was in its usual place within his vest, he walked leisurely away.

While the metaphysical spy proceeded upon his determination to re-enter Fredericksburg, let us glance back at the tavern of Silas Cobbs where, meanwhile, another and a singular occurrence is worthy of attention.

Having started the hound upon the trail of the Unionist, Cobbs was somewhat disappointed and wroth to discover the coming army of blue over the slopes and ridges, as it so quickly disappeared behind the hill. Bolt and Ross, who followed from following the hound.

"May an earthquake swallow up every Yankee in Christendom!" he fumed, stamping his wooden stump on the ground, and after on the stump, where there is no place to ascend. "But they need not think that I fear them. Oh, no! If I have but one leg, they will find that a man with one leg can be as brave as the rest. Yes, I will shoot them, you old Silas Cobbs is made of. Wait." And he called, as he thumped into the broad hall: "Coal—coal! where are you, you black inn?"

"Hurry to the Mass. Silas!"

"Down cellar and bring up my flag, Coal. Hurry there!"

While Coal hastened to do as he was bid in the inn-keeper entered the room where he had left Ethel when summoned outside by Lieutenant Bolt shortly before.

He had left the negroes, Coal's mother, with his daughter, who remained unconscious up to the time of his going out.

But neither the negro nor Ethel was in the room now.

And more, as he crossed the threshold, he had seen.

What he saw there, instead of his child, was enough to startle any man.

On the floor beside the lounge on which Ethel had been sitting, lay a large, dark, a splash—a splash of blood, unmistakably.

Leading from the splotch to the window, which was open, was a distinct trail—a trail of blood.

The window sill were marks—marks of paws, like the paws of a dog, or two dogs, so mixed were they, and these two were imprinted in blood.

The old man gazed for an instant, then

capped his hands to his bald temples in a dismaying shudder.

"Save my soul!" he gasped. "They are loose—the two new hounds I purchased from Capt. Digby, Loose, and they have been here; they have first murdered and then carried off my child. For Digby said that they were very cannibals—they would eat a man if they caught the smell of his blood about that human's person! Oh, God! my poor Ethel!"

For a brief space he was too overcome for further speech or action, standing there gasping at the evidence of Ethel's having been killed, carried off and devoured by two gigantic hounds which he had recently bought of a planter who had entered the service and had no further use for the savage beasts.

Fully capable were they, he knew, of carrying off a human; and cannibals enough were they, he had been informed, to eat human flesh if that flesh contained the slightest smell of blood about it.

And Ethel's hand had been bruised to bleeding by the rough jostling and her head crushed in the troopers in pursuit of the Unionist in the upper story of the inn.

"Then Cobbs cried, frantically:

"Coal! Dinah! Here! Come! Hurry!

Pity me, I say!"

The negress came running.

"Where is my child?" he demanded, with dilating eyes.

"Where is my child? Do you hear? What have you done with her? Tell me—quick! or I'll lay you alive!" and he advanced upon the astounded negress with uplifted cane, as if he would smite her to death.

"Massa Silas," she cried, "deed I doesn't know whar she is, fo' shuah—'deed I doesn't."

"But I left you here with her."

"An' she done got well again, Massa Silas, an' tol' me fo' to 'clar out, at she's all right I swears, Massa Silas. I doesn't know whar she is."

"She's murdered!" piped the horrified father, almost in a scream, as he stamped about. "She's murdered by those accursed bloodhounds! I was persuaded to buy of Captain Digby."

"A dog Lawd!" burst from Dinah, as her glance now fell upon the tell-tale blood spots.

"My ar's de flag," said Coal, at this juncture.

And the boy added:

"Dey's a comin', Massa Silas—de Yankees are comin'! Heys' almos' 't'ight hyar. See em troug de winder—"

"Fly about—fly about!" Cobbs snapped, interrupting. "Give me the flag; and fly about and close the doors and windows."

The Yankees can't come into the house of Silas Cobbs. Go!—off with you!" the old pitched in a key so high that his voice cracked and pierced the ears with the sharpness of a scalpel.

The negress and her boy hastened to obey the command, and there was a sound of banging doors and rattling shutters in a rapidity that told they had a system between them for this particular office.

"I's pow'ful glad Massa Silas isn't a goin' fo' to let dem Norf trash inside hyar," said Coal, to his mother, as they hurried to and fro.

"Hush, chile; you doesn't know what you's talkin' 'bout. Ef dem Norf trash, as you calls 'em, wuz to get in here and take Massa Silas home, you jes bet dey ain't goin' fo' to do hit, now."

"Den we's all gwine be eat up!" doled the boy.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN DENVER'S LITTLE STORY.

A short distance below Cobbs' Rest, the road that led up the slope to the tavern was forced, the left branch of which led into Falmouth.

At this fork, at the moment when we see the few occupants of the tavern engaged with the door, and windows, were halted the companies of a blue-clad regiment.

For some reason they were detained there while the other regiments continued on in that winding way over the hill, and the line of blue plain, and even they, soldiers themselves, were engaged, while at rest, in absorbingly watching the long lines marching past toward the Rappahannock.

The two captains of the leading companies had come together for a brief conversation—both of such apparent youth in years, that at first glance one would say they were hardly fitted to command the bearded men around

But those bearded men loved and had confidence in the seeming youths who commanded them; the bloody field of Antietam had taught them that they possessed courage, skill and coolness.

Old friends were they.

"Well, Denver," said he of the foremost company, "you are nearing the town at which you have said lies the fate of your whole future life."

"Yes, Fredericksburg. And do you know, I would almost be willing to sacrifice the fortune that may come to me when I see a better chance of doing so, could I honorably avoid a meeting with that party."

"Nonsense! fortunes must not be lightly thrown away, my dear fellow."

"Under such conditions, perhaps they would be better so. I have never told you the whole circumstances of the case, Will."

"No, and I have not asked it; for I supposed it was not a strictly private matter, and you would have revealed it to me long ago."

"I do not object to telling you. If I do so, you can be the better understand why I say what I do. I do not think of it as I will not take long to tell it, and if you care to hear, I will relate the circumstances to you briefly."

"Suit yourself, Denver. I will listen intently, and of course you know that."

"When my father died two years ago his property, every one thought, would revert direct to me. Well, in a way, it might have done so. But, as one night before his death he called me to his bedside and told me a story of his past life which I hesitate to reveal even to you, my old friend. No matter. My father, John Denver, was once a very poor man. He had a warm friend in a man named Arnold DeKay, who lived in Fredericksburg. This Arnold DeKay advanced my father a large sum of money as a friendly loan. My father speculated and became rich. I was then living. Before the loan became due DeKay had a child by his wife—a daughter; and he conceived the notion of forming a marriage contract between his only child, himself and his daughter, to be fulfilled when I should become of age."

"A romance, truly," interpolated Will Harding, with a smile.

"Yes, and like a great many other romances it has a cloud also, as you will learn. My father readily agreed to the proposition which came from DeKay, that is as far as it is presumably possible for parents to go in the scheme of their children."

"But that little arrangement, my father, it seems, gave himself no further trouble about the loan of money received from DeKay. Years passed before DeKay ever mentioned the matter."

"When he did so, my father evaded him. So long a time had elapsed that the claim for the money, if any should have been made, had become outlawed; it was a question of his honor."

"But your father was so occupied with his affairs, which were yielding him a vast income, to care a bosh whether DeKay liked this treatment or not. So the years went by and I grew to manhood. Mildred DeKay, too, was growing. That is the daughter of Arnold DeKay whom it was intended I was to marry."

"In this light of which I speak, preceding the time when my father, he mentioned me with the facts in the case for the first time. He also showed me a paper which he had received later from DeKay, in which, when it was handed him, for his signature, he was set forth that if I, the son, would fulfill the contract made for the marriage of his daughter, Mildred, with me, the loan of the money he considered paid."

"DeKay's was a strange coincidence, was also dying at the time he sent this communication to my father, and it bore in its contents the stamp of that old friendly affection which he had entertained for John Denver."

"It would appear that there, on his dying bed, my father's conscience smote him for his neglect of his old and staunch friend. He exacted a promise from me that I would marry the daughter of Arnold DeKay and do one of two things—marry her if I could persuade her to it, which would thereby secure to me the money, or make her a widow."

"DeKay's father's name. After settling up the estate and ascertaining exactly what was the indebtedness of my father to DeKay, I discovered that, through more recent speculations which had brought me badly, there barely remained enough to make the restitution an alternative. Now, I have never yet seen this Mildred DeKay. For my father, she has already been married to another; and even if she is heart-free, I would not ask her to become my bride for

the mere sake of preserving to myself a few thousands of dollars."

"Hence, I say to you, old friend, I almost feel as if I would prefer to make the relinquishment of the fortune at once, and be done with it, sooner than the ordeal of even a conversation with the young lady on the subject."

Will Harding was a very practical fellow. The moment his comrade in arms ceased his narrative, he exclaimed, however:

"You will not say so, Will? If I can help it. You will seek the Southern beauty and lay the whole case before her. Then you will appropriate a little time to become better acquainted, and if both she and you decide, after that acquaintance, that you are not fitted for each other, then—then, I say, my dear boy, you will do the honorable thing in regard to the fortune which you say you desire to do now."

Captain Harding broke off short, adding in an undertone:

"Here comes the colonel, and he is in a hurry!"

The column of the halted regiment was riding swiftly toward the head of the ranks, where he presently drew rein with a jerk, saying:

"Captain Denver?"

Denver saluted.

"You see that house on the rise?" pointing upward toward the cavernous windows of which we had just emerged.

"Yes, colonel."

"Look at the roof—the roof, sir. Look at the roof!"

The words were loud. Every man in the company turned his eyes in the direction indicated.

There from the roof of Cobbs' Rest floated definitely a flag of the Confederacy—the stars and bars!

"Go up there and haul down that rag, Captain Denver," ordered the colonel, brusquely.

Denver at once detached four men from his company, motuering the sergeant to accompany them.

With these he started briskly up the slope.

When they reached the tavern, Cobbs thrust his head forth from an upper window and snarled:

"What do you want here, you Yankees? Go 'long about your business—"

"Open this door!" interrupted the demand of the young captain, who had tried the front entrance and found it securely fastened by it.

"Clear out, I say, or it'll be the worse for you—"

Shall we break down the siebarg, captain?" asked the sergeant.

"Down with this door, men," said Denver shortly.

With musket butts the Unionists began such a banging on the door that the stout old man in every panel in it must soon yield in splinters.

"Begone from there," half howled Cobbs from the upper story.

His voice was almost entirely drowned in the noise of the thumping musket butts, and he withdrew his head from the window as he saw the Federal captain draw his revolver and call to his aides to get ready.

Crash went the door, splintered from its hinges.

In the broad and dingy hallway marched the soldiers and followed their captain up the stairs.

At the head of the flight they came upon the bodies of the Confederate troopers who remained laying where they had fallen beneath the fusillade of Battery Bob.

With hardly a glance at these, however, and thinking only of tearing down that detested flag which haunted in the very face of this war, the Federal captain turned to ascend the narrower flight leading to the roof.

Hardly had he reached the second step when the door of a room from the stair opened suddenly, and simultaneously there was a loud discharge from a shot-gun.

Denver threw up his hands, his sword falling from his grasp, and reeled backward to be caught by the sergeant who was close behind him.

Following the treacherous discharge of the gun, the voice of Cobbs cried:

"Take that, you interloping Yankee!"

CHAPTER IX.

IMPALED ON FEDERAL BAYONETS.

It was a dastard shot that checked the advance of the young captain on the stairs leading to the roof.

But the deed was the most unfortunate and of the inn-keeper's life, as the occurrences of the next swift minute proved.

A cry in concert and horror broke from the lips of the four soldiers who were following their officer upward, and, with one glance at the bleeding form, held in the sergeant's timely embrace, they lowered their muskets and charged upon the rabid secessionist.

The clubbed his shot-gun and backed against the wall.

"Back—back, you bounds of blue!" he snarled, with vehemence, and vielding the weapon above his head in a menacing sweep, while his eyes blazed furiously.

But the soldiers, with cap-strips crunched between their teeth, and with but one thought of avenging their captain, almost in disregard the sweeping gesture, and, pressing in upon the angry would-be assassin until he was fairly tight against the wall; and the gun clashed in its circling first on one bayonet and then on another, knocking them aside in the doorway, and then he was so simply called upon to make.

The voice of the sergeant cried: "Down with him, lads! Spit the rebel like a frog! No mercy for him! Give it to him!"

It was a desperate resistance which Cobbs made against the odds by which he was surrounded; for they came from every side now, their bayonets prodding at him, and seeming each in turn about to break through the wonderful succession of circles and sweeps he plied around him.

But at last there rung through every room and corridor of the old inn, such a cry of mortuary as to freeze the blood of one who might have heard, without understanding, the terrific struggle progressing there in the upper story.

Simultaneously four sharp, shining, terrible bayonets were lunged forward at the breast of the too-keeper.

Every point of steel found its mark.

With the four weapon points protruding from back, he was actually pinned to the wall and held there, and the shot-gun dropped from his grasp.

For an instant there seemed to struggle in his throat an awful, agonizing cry, and then, as his eyes burst with a transient light of horror and hate combined.

Then the head fell forward on the breast and the bayonets let his dead weight fall with sickening crash to the floor, and the instant came a loud ejaculation from the sergeant.

"Hoory! Ho boys, he isn't dead!—the captain isn't dead!"

For Denver had opened his eyes again just as the landlord went down—opened them though in a mist of blood that was gushing over his face from a wound where the shot had torn a portion from the roof of his chest, and lay on a spot above his temple, though fortunately no more than a scalp wound.

The shock had momentarily deprived him of consciousness.

Even while the sergeant cried out the tidings that he still lived, he found strength sufficient to release himself from the supporting arms of his subordinate.

His mind was still in a dazed condition, as he cried:

"The flag, sergeant! Get the flag down—"

"Are you badly hurt, captain?" the soldier broke in.

"No matter. The flag. Down with the hated thing; and it makes no difference whether I am badly hurt or not. Hasten!"

Henry Deaver did not know—could not know—whether his wound was serious or not.

But he paused not to consider it. He had been ordered to haul down the defiant banner, and he flung from the roof of the inn, and his paramount thought, even in the pain which he was enduring, was to carry out that order.

The sergeant bounded up the remainder of the stairs and through the scuttle.

In a few moments he had whipped the flag from his halyards, and appeared again with it hanging over his arm.

Having glanced at the dead body of the inn-keeper, and approving the course of the soldiers who had done what they did in the supposed avenging of the murder of their captain, Deaver entered into a room where he had been slain and towel.

"The rascal gave me a close call," he muttered, as he examined his wound by the aid of a mirror there. "But I think I am worth a dozen dead men yet; this will bleed, I an-

ticipate, considerably, but no danger can come from it."

The sergeant just then entered.

"Here's the flag, captain."

"Hold it up and we will take it to the colonel."

"Let me bandage that tear for you, captain."

The soldier advanced and began to adjust an improvised bandage about the brow of his wounded officer, almost without waiting for him to give the permission.

And he proved himself somewhat of an adept.

By the time the act was completed one of the privates in the hallway came in, exclaiming:

"Something's burning, captain. I think the house is afire."

An unmistakable odor of smoke was ascending to the upper stories of the inn.

While the scene had progressed above, there was another scene in the lower part of the building, which briefly explained this significant odor.

Dinah and the boy, Coal, after having undone everything secure about the house, had retreated to the kitchen in some trepidation for the result of their master's intended bold defiance of the Federal soldiers.

They listened in positive trembling to the soldier who told of the front door being battered down.

When the Unionists had forced an entrance and were heard going up the stairs, Dinah, bearing the lamp, and she had lighted because of the darkness that prevailed after the closing of all the windows, beckoned to Coal, and stole forward through the lower hall.

At the moment when she reached the foot of the stairs, and as she craned her neck, throwing one black ear upward to catch what might be transpiring above, there came the discharge of the shotgun which was so near smiting out the life of Captain Henry Deaver.

Its suddenness caused her to start; the lamp slipped from her grasp and fell with a crash to the floor, its oil bursting in a small sheet of flame and causing a scolding of her clothes. Then came the additional sounds of struggle, and the soon accompanying shriek of the man impaled on the Federal bayonets.

"De good Lawd! Hyur, you, come long outen here! Hy, dar' dey's done killed massa—I knows hit. Come long outen hyar!"

The two ran to the rear of the building and out at the door there, making with all speed toward the woods.

"Come," said Captain Denver, rejoicing his men.

With sword in hand, and stepping over the dead bodies of the Confederate soldiers returned to the inn, which no remark had yet been made, he led the way down stairs and out at the front of the inn.

The hauling down of the flag had been witnessed by the advanced companies of the regiment that was halted at the base of the slope.

When the little squad came forth and took up the return march, another cheer—like the first that had gone up when the flag disappeared from the roof—greeted them.

But Captain Denver reported the fulfillment of the order.

"You are wounded?" said the colonel, interrogatively, as he came up to him.

"A little scratch, sir," Denver replied.

"It will not incapacitate me, I assure you."

Hardly had Denver returned from the execution of the order to haul down the Confederate flag, when the order came to resume march.

The regiment moved on; and as it went, there could be seen a cloud of smoke arising from the ancient building on the heights.

But that was soon to be no more.

But hark!

A sound of war suddenly broke upon the ears of the marching regiment.

There was a boom of heavy guns ahead.

Guns of the light battery posted by the Confederates on the heights above Fredericksburg.

Falmouth had been long since deserted, but the knowledge of the advance of the Union army.

Again the guns.

The van of Sumner's division was entering Falmouth.

Then more guns, as the Union batteries opened upon those on the opposite heights—and still more on the blue columns in majestic array that were to be the foe again on the banks of the Rappahannock.

It is not infrequent that a portion of an

army gets hold upon the thoughts and spirits of a commander.

On this occasion it was well known that Sumner was crossing at once by the easily available fords and occupying the town.

But orders from Burnside held him back. There halted the van of the army, in comparative inactivity, while the butternut host was massing, massing, massing, on the opposite shores and crests in constantly increasing formations of the army.

If he would not cross, the commander of this grand division could at least derive satisfaction for the promptness with which the Parrott guns of Pettit silenced the barking of the Confederates.

From Stafford Heights, Sumner could see the Confederate gunners driven from their posts by the shots of Pettit.

CHAPTER X.

A LOVER IN GRAY.

The afternoon was shortening.

While throughout the day thus wasted by the van of the Union army, another little piece of our drama was enacting in the town of Fredericksburg that must be here detailed.

One of the most notable figures of the town was that which was known as the De-Kay mansion.

Arnold DeKay had died some years previous to the date of this narrative, as may be seen by the brief conversation between the two young captains.

The property, with a considerable inheritance, had reverted wholly to Mildred DeKay, an only child, a very beautiful girl now at the verge of womanhood, an orphan and much sought after at the commencement of the war by young Southerners, the sons of planters, and nearly all worthy of her, had, however, declined to accept their earnest importunities to wed.

The most persistent of these had been a dashing fellow, by name Vane Artwell, who had early accepted a lieutenancy in the army of the United States.

And least of all her admirers was Artwell esteemed by the Southern girl, because of rumors after rumors that had reached her ears, and which had induced her to adopt habits had been in a measure carefully concealed.

For some time she had been relieved of his presence and his continuous offers of marriage, which would not be silenced by her own as regular refusals; but now, when Lee was concentrating in the vicinity of Fredericksburg, and the town was filling to some extent with the rapid-fire brigades of gray, she realized that she must again endure the ordeal of meeting with this man whom she could hardly drive peremptorily from her because she knew that his profession was one of the quality of being sincere, and that he had wealth enough to give her the home which he was begging her to accept.

On this afternoon, apprised of the approach of the Federal army, and listening with not a little uneasiness to the sounds in the street that told of constant arrivals of the Southern forces, she was standing on the porch, looking toward the river, a partial view of which she had, when the old and faithful negro who had served her parents at the time of her birth, tapped on the door.

When Snow entered, in answer to her recognition of his knock, his teeth were showing:

"He am down dar, Missy Mildred."

"Who?" she asked.

"De lieutenant. He done come ag'in. Sheil I tell him wot you's too busy fo' to see him."

"No. I will see him. You may say that I will be down presently."

"At de house, Missy Mildred."

"I have made up my mind at last," she murmured, when again alone, "that I will be rid of Lieutenant Artwell once for all finally. If it is necessary, I will even do what I have not heretofore considered necessary; I will tell him why it is impossible for me even to listen to his suit, that I am the promised wife of another."

And though I have been told that other, my mind is made up to fulfill the dying wishes of a father who was ever kind to me and wed the person when he shall present himself and all and all.

Nevertheless, I promised my father before he breathed his last, that if the son of John Deaver ever came to ask me to be his

wife, and if he was a worthy man, I would be his even if I could not feel the love for him that a woman should feel for the man she loves her husband. Yes, I will keep the pledge I gave my dying father."

Pansing for a few hasty touches to her toilet, she descended to the parlor.

And there in waiting was a young man of handsome features and muscular build.

An officer in the uniform of a Confederate lieutenant.

"Miss Mildred," he saluted, bowing.

"I should say, Lieutenant Artwell," she returned, calmly, and sweeping across to a chair.

"I have made bold to call after an absence that has been long and to me," he continued. "I have, fortunately, once again reached your charming presence. The first opportunity that occurred, I have taken to show you that I have still survived the Yankee bullets."

"You are to be congratulated."

"Are you not positively glad? 'Congratulate' is a mild word from you for one who has been very devoted."

"Lieutenant Artwell," she interrupted, in a way that caused him to pause before her as he was advancing to take a seat by her side. "I had hesitated to see you at all today. My reason is, that I can foresee what will transpire before you leave me. I have a great amount of patience, because, notwithstanding the fact that in the past, I realize that you are a gentleman of an honored family, and you are sincere in the motive which attracts you so much to me. But it is as well that we should understand one another fully and forever."

Though this premise might have given him a hint of what was to ensue, he did not relax the smile on the handsome face; and with another bow waited for her to proceed.

"I have told you that I can never accept your offer of marriage," Mildred pursued. "Please do me the favor to receive that announcement now—though you have not seemed inclined to do so before—as utterly final."

"What heart never won fair lady, they say," rejoined the Confederate. "I have hopes of one day winning you, Mildred, despite this last and most emphatic refusal of mine. Indeed, I am here to-day to plead again with you, and may make use of the happiest man in the world, and permit me to prove that I can and will make your life all that a woman could desire—"

"It is useless. And to show you how useless it is, I have decided to tell you something that I had hoped would not be necessary. I am the promised bride of another."

The effect of her words was marked. The smile faded from Vane Artwell's face, and he looked at her first incredulously, then frowningly.

"Another?" he repeated.

"Not another," she replied.

"Who?"

"I do not comprehend that it is necessary for me to say more than I have."

"A moment's silence, and then he laughed lowly.

"See, You use this declaration as a mere artifice to make me drop the subject. But—"

"It is no artifice, sir, nor am I in the habit of using such. And now you will please excuse me. I am engaged."

She arose and would have left the parlor.

She arose, accepted her, with one arm outstretched.

"Wait, please."

"What is it?"

"If you say, tell me who this man is who has won you from me."

"I never was yours, though you may have been concocted enough to imagine so," she broke in with some irritability.

"At least, where is he? Of all whom I know to have been racing with me for the favor of your smiles, which one is it that has been so fortunate?"

"I will tell you that the gentleman is one whom you have never seen."

"I would like to see him," with an accent of latent menace.

"Because I would soon show him that Mildred DeKay is not to be won from me without a struggle that involves a little bloodshed."

"I have no doubt you would find him as good a man as yourself, sir."

"Then tell me where to seek him."

"In the impenetrable forest for which she could not account, and possibly attracted to it by its tone, she said, spiritedly:

"Go look for him, then, in the ranks of the

Northern army, for I have understood that he is there—"

"Ha! a Yankee! You are the promised bride of one of our race. Now look you, Miss Mildred; I tell you here, on this spot, that I will find the man if you will give me his name. Dare you do it?"

In another impulse she answered almost before she knew that the words had left her lips:

"His name is Harry Denver. Find and meet him if you dare!"

"I shall do what I wish," she said.

"He grasped the sword at his side, and half drew it.

But the speech of fire that was about to break forth was interrupted by the appearance of the old negro, Snow, who came in unceremoniously at the door, saying:

"De Revernd Mistah Samuels."

"Close on the announcement entered a clerical-looking gentleman, who immediately said:

"That, but, sir! What are you about to do? Draw your sword in the presence of a lady?"

"Mr. Samuels, I am more glad than I can tell you that you have come. Pray be at home."

She went to the clergyman's side and took his hand warmly.

They were evidently well acquainted.

Artwell had never seen the man at the mansion on any of his former and frequent visits.

At this particular instant he looked upon the sudden intrusion with an emotion of anger, as he foresaw that his interview with Mildred could no longer be private.

CHAPTER XI. THE MUSCLE OF BATTERY BOB.

Mildred may have been correct in her expression of knowledge that Vane Artwell came of an honored family and was a gentleman.

But perhaps recent and active contact with the army had taken much of the polish from his nature, which would account for the brusque manner of his inquiry:

"I am named Samuel Samuels. As you may perceive, I am a minister of the gospel."

Well, this young lady and myself are engaged at present in discussing a matter of business, and you will oblige us by withdrawing until it is finished—"

"Lieutenant Artwell!"

The girl's voice broke in upon him with sharp hauteur.

And she added:

"Please understand that I am in my own house; and not unless I make such a request as that of my visitors, are they called upon in the least to regard it."

"Quite right, my dear young lady," said Samuels, smiling. "I greatly fear I was just in time to prevent a very unpleasant exhibition on the part of this young man. Might I ask what is the matter with him?"

The matter is, exclaimed Artwell, redrawing his sword, the rebuke from Mildred's lips, "that I meant just what I said. And if you do not regard it, I shall call in my guard which you may have observed on the outside of my coat, and have you dug out. These are not times when even a minister's garb will protect the man if he makes himself obnoxious. I have come here to have a talk with you, and have you dug out. I give you just two minutes to make yourself scarce."

Mildred had listened in blushing amazement, and not until from one whom she thought heretofore to possess a degree of gentlemanly politeness.

A hot retort was upon her red lips.

But the Reverend Samuels raised one hand to check her, while he said calmly to the lieutenant:

"Have you a watch?"

"A watch?" repeated Artwell.

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because I want you to count the two minutes."

"Why then?"

"At the expiration of that time I intend to take you by the neck, sir, and throw you out among your vassals on the pavement."

He was cool reply.

The words were so astonishing that for a second they seemed to render the hot young Southerner dumb.

Then he uttered a half suppressed oath.

"I shall not call in my guard to drag you out of here!" he cried. "But I will myself teach you a lesson that may go a great

way with others like you who imagine that because they wear that garb they can say and do as they please."

He took a hasty step toward the cool-faced clergyman.

Mildred uttered a little cry, and would have thrown herself between.

But again the Reverend Samuels waved her aside.

Three steps only did the young officer take.

Then something happened which showed him that there is sometimes a strength in the arms of a clergyman that must be regarded with circumspection.

Out and straight from the shoulder shot the fist of the Reverend Samuels.

Thuck! sound the knuckles of that fist in the face of Artwell, who suddenly found himself spinning helplessly backward until he fell with an awkward sprawl over a chair.

Though severely dealt with and surprised by the adroitness of the blow, he was not in the least stunned, and quickly gathered himself up.

"By my soul!" he snapped, with flaming face. "I will be even with you for that!"

Forward he came again.

The time was now his.

As Mildred shrank from these combatants in her parlor, she saw the lieutenant, by a clever dodge, gain an entrance within the guard which the clergyman had thrown up to meet him, and then he instantly followed a fierce wrestling struggle.

"I have you now," hissed Artwell, who had instantly conceived the idea that his antagonist was something more than his garb indicated.

In pursuance of this suspicion, he devoted one hand to the task of tearing away the stiff collar at the clergyman's neck, while he maintained the struggle with the other.

Presently he uttered another exclamation that showed he was surprised himself by the result of that wrestling gripe on Samuels' collar.

Away came collar and button. The tight fitting coat was torn loose at the front, and lo! underneath was revealed the upper of a blue blouse with its shiny brass buttons having on them the monogrammed letters U. S.

In the effort for the mastery the spectacles were dashed to the wall, and the hat, revealing a head of close cropped hair.

Finding himself thus discovered at least to be a Unionist the voice of Battery Bob now cried:

"Here's at you, bold Johnny!"

Accompanying the words, he performed a feat that was a marvel of strength and prowess.

Lieutenant Artwell found himself lifted bodily from the floor by the arms of the spy.

For a moment he was poised and held kicking in the air.

Then he was hurled across the room, in what almost seemed to be the course of an arch, and went crashing through the rear window onto the veranda without.

While the lieutenant lay there inensible from the shock of his violent fall, Robert Ross stepped quickly to the side of Mildred.

"Miss DeKay," he said, speaking rapidly.

"I have visited you often, and I am sure you never suspected me of being a Yankee."

Yes, I am a Yankee—I am more—I am a spy here in Fredericksburg. That man was annoying you; I heard nearly the whole of the dialogue which was going on. I am sorry I had to expose myself to relieve you. But having done so, will you call in the squad which is on the pavement—"

"Assuredly no," the girl interrupted. "To the contrary, my heart is with you and your army. I thank you for having become my champion."

You say your heart is with the army of the North?"

"It has ever been since the commencement of the war."

"Then why do you remain in the South, where there are such a number of men of your sex, and these increasing every day? Why not seek the North, where you will be safe from the annoyance of such men as that?" and he pointed toward the veranda, indicating the prostrate and motionless form of Artwell.

"I have not much to keep me here—only this old mansion, which I inherit from my father and which I was born. My father had nearly all of his investments in the North, and I have been debarré from any knowledge of them since the war. So, you see, there is really no reason for my staying."

But I have been thinking of it more this day than ever before."

Battery Bob was silent for a moment, thinking.

"Suppose you commit yourself to my care," he said. "I will go so far as to place you on your way safely, though I cannot remain with you."

"Who are you?" the girl asked.

"My name is Robert Ross. I am known as Battery Bob."

"I have heard that name."

"Even into the little town of Fredericksburg had wafted the rumor of the strange man who had distinguished himself in the scouting forays before the battle of the Antietam by the singular manner he had of fighting with his enemies."

"If you will consent to the venture," he pursued, quickly, "let me urge that the sooner the start is made the better."

"There was a sound of heavy tramping feet in the hall without, as of several men having entered, and a rough, bowel-like voice was exclaiming:

"Ho, here! Somebody—where are you? Blast it, there must be somebody at home, judging by the crash I heard. And I am of the opinion that something may have happened to the lieutenant."

The voice of the cavalryman, Lieutenant Rory Bolt.

With a dextrous rapidity, Battery Bob resumed the neat disguise which had been torn from him in his encounter with Lieutenant Artwell.

"Not a moment is to be lost, Miss DeKay. If you are going with me. Those men will be here in a minute; the body of the lieutenant will be discovered, and I recognize that to be the voice of another lieutenant, a boon companion of the man I have worsted, who is both bold and devilish. He would not find me more than than any other man in the world. How long will it take you to prepare, while I secrete myself out there in the garden?"

Mildred smiled.

"It will take me no longer than the time necessary to tie my bonnet strings. I said I had thought seriously to-day of leaving Fredericksburg if I could. You may even perceive that I am not a timid being, and will venture the matter with Snow, knowing that it will be safe in his hands if no unusual event transpires. And if ever this cruel war should end, I may return to my old home."

"Come, then," he urged, before she had finished speaking.

Already the tramp of the cavalrymen who had accompanied Lieutenant Artwell to the house were sounding close to the door.

CHAPTER XII.

A FLIGHT FROM HOME.

Having resolved to accompany the young Unionist to a place whence she could pass the Federal lines and proceed northward, Mildred showed him the next moment that she was indeed prepared for the journey at short notice.

"Come," she said, "I am ready. My hat is close at hand."

Gathering up her riding skirt, she started swiftly in the direction of the veranda.

Here she stepped over the still unconscious form of Lieutenant Artwell without noticing it.

At the outer side of the veranda hung her hat and a small satchel.

"You see," taking both of these in hand, "I was almost on the point of departing alone."

"You stopped short in my speech as a sound from the parlor beyond told that the Confederates who were led by Rory Bolt had entered there and were looking about for some explanation of the recent crash of glass that I had heard."

Not a minute was to be lost.

Swift-footed she led the way down the outer steps and along the garden path toward a gate in the low stone wall.

Presently they had left the premises and were hastening away in the direction of the canal.

The DeKay mansion was situated at or near the northwestern part of the town, and their course after going a short distance was turned to follow the canal westward.

"It is our safest course," remarked Ross, as they proceeded rapidly. "We are lucky in two ways; the attack on Fredericksburg is expected more in direct opposite to the town, and the situation of your house is some distance from the danger of the inhabitants. Hasteen."

It was nearly dusk.

The light battery which had opposed the

advance of Sumner had been driven into the town, and the guns that had indicated the brief engagement had ceased their desultory thunder.

Several companies of the Mississippi infantry were being hurried to the water-front of the town, their march somewhat embarrassed by the half-panic-stricken crowd of people which, in scattering groups, either pursued a similar course or rushed excitedly in a contrary direction.

The progress of our couple was not interfered with.

The clerical garb of our Federal spy, and the Federal aid accompanied by a young and beautiful girl, alarmed any suspicion that might have arisen regarding them.

At a point nearly two miles above the town, where but a narrow strip through which ran the canal separated the rising bank from the Rappahannock, Ross suggested that they pause for a rest.

The vicinity was not yet occupied permanently by any of the forces of Lee, and they were accordingly concentrating on that side of the river, and he considered the spot pretty safe from danger of molestation.

"Yes, I am weary," she admitted, as they rested themselves on a log, and while we are resting, sir, I would like to ask a few questions."

"I shall be happy to answer them if I can."

"As you are the Unionist, perhaps you can give me the information which I particularly seek. Before asking the question, however, let me explain briefly a little secret of my life—"

"It is a secret, Miss DeKay, would it not be better for you to preserve it?"

"It is not so wonderfully secret as that. Listen, please. You may be surprised to hear that I am the betrothed of a man whom I have never seen."

"We were both pledged to each other by our fathers when mere infants. I learned this from my father on his dying bed, which transpired, as you have learned, just at the commencement of the war. The father of this young man died, leaving me a large sum of money. My father agreed that if the young man would carry out the marriage contract the debt should be considered paid."

"I was to prosecute the claim at earliest opportunity as his heir. This party, my father said, had received a commission in the Union army, then concentrating at Washington. I desire to find him, if such a thing is possible. I can find that in each other to make a union desirable, I am ready to carry out the instruction of my father and wed with him; if not, then my mind is made up to derive from the instruction to the extent of relinquishing all claim upon him, giving him a receipt for the amount which his father owed my father."

"You are fully the generous girl which your father speaks you to be," said Ross, admiringly.

Then he asked:

"What is the name of this young gentleman who may have the opportunity of wedding with so desirable a bride as you are?"

"Denver—Henry Denver."

"Why, I know him well!" he instantly exclaimed.

"Do you?" eagerly. "I am glad of that. Oh, tell me what he looks like?" she at once demanded, with all a woman's natural curiosity under such peculiar circumstances.

"I will tell you that he is a fine gentleman and a brave soldier. He distinguished himself particularly in the Antietam, and I shouldn't be surprised to hear of his early promotion for bravery and talent."

The eyes of the lovely girl were sparkling as she listened to the praise of the man she was to marry.

"And—and—" she said, hesitatingly, "he is not yet married?"

Ross looked at her smiling.

"No; not married. You appear to be already interested in him, Miss DeKay?"

"Ah! that is because I know if he is what you say, he must also be a worthy man at heart."

"You can tell me where to find him?"

"He is now in the army marching on Fredericksburg."

"Does he close his eyes?"

"But," he said, rising, "it is nearly dark. We had better be moving. I have an important engagement in this vicinity as soon as night has fully set in. I must go back to my quarters."

"Then you may be caught—"

"Oh, no; I have no fear of that. I may assume another disguise. Come, we shall cross at a short distance above here."

A little further up the stream Ross had a boat tied.

Unmurmured the small craft, he placed her comfortably in the bow and pushed off for the crossing, and the spectral front of the hills rose frowningly.

In due time they reached the other side, and he led the way along a narrow path that afforded an apology for an ascent of the almost perpendicular hill.

"It is very quiet here now," Ross said, as they made their way along somewhat tediously. "But you will find ere long that the night will be a very noisy one."

"Deaths, too, that I sadly fear are to avail nothing for the Union army."

"You do not think they will capture Fredericksburg?"

"Hardly. If they do, the cost will be more than the thing is worth. Hark!"

He paused suddenly, holding her back, as a thrilling sound just then came to their ears from a point above.

It was the deep, sonorous bay of a bloodhound.

The note was well known to Mildred, and as she shuddered she could not repress a slight tremble of apprehension.

"A hound!" she exclaimed. "A hound loose in this wild place. I know by his peculiar note that he is searching for some one—following a trail."

"His master, from whom he has become lost," suggested Ross, to allay her fears, though he had instantly recognized in the voice that he heard the voice of the same one which he had encountered during the day.

"No," Mildred disputed. "I know the note. The hound is on a trail. Suppose he should come upon us and in the darkness mistake us for the party he is tracking."

"Be guided by me—"

"It is coming closer—"

And as he seemed the notes that told of a bloodhound on a trail were momentarily drawing nearer.

Ross acted promptly, and with the only facility at command.

He stepped forward, he perceived an extending tree bough which was, however, several feet above his greatest capacity for a leap.

But Mildred saw him whip open the front of his coat, he seized the rope from his waist he began to unwind a stout rope.

"I carry this handy for many emergencies, of which this is one," he said, while taking the rope rapidly from his person and carefully coiling it at his feet at the same time to avoid a tangle.

Next he threw the rope dexterously over the limb above, and in another moment was drawing himself upward.

A moment more, and the rope came dangling down at her side, while he called:

"I have made a slip in the end, Miss DeKay. Place it beneath your arms and I will draw you up."

"But why not have gone up the body of the tree," she questioned, with some hesitation at the novel proceeding.

"Because, if our trail ends at the tree, and if that tree should be cut down, the sound, it will be discovered at once that we are here. As it is, the brute will be baffled. Haste! the dog is almost here!"

The suspense decided her.

Obedying his instruction, she placed the slip beneath her arms, and then the strong muscles of the spy raised her clear of the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

ETHEL'S THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

Hardly had Mildred been placed safely beside the strong-armed man, when there was a rushing himself upward.

But it was not such a sound as would be made by the passage of the beast they were anticipating.

There was an unmistakable pat of foot-steps.

They heard a voice panting, loud enough to be heard in their concealment:

"Save me, Heaven! for I fear I cannot go much further. I am so weary, I shall die. You can tell that beast who has followed me for long and terrible hours, and I have wondered why he has not ere this fallen upon me and devoured me!"

The rest of the panted words which she uttered, she fell in the spot in a wild and weary flight before the savage pursuer.

At sound of the voice, Ross had started so greatly as to nearly lose his balance upon the limb.

"My God!" he burst forth. "Am I surely awake? That is the voice of Ethel! She is pursued by the bloodhound!"

Before Mildred could ask for an explanation of his words, he added, to her: "I remain here until I return. I must go to the dog, that person, who is dearer to me than my own life!"

The next instant he had swung from the bough, dropping to the ground directly in the path of the returning hunter. The latter had been waited for one second as to whether he should wait the coming of the animal or hasten after the one whom he had recognized as his betrothed, the inn-keeper's daughter, thus menaced by a horrible peril.

On the latter course he decided, turning and plunging down the narrow path, calling as he ran:

"Wait, Ethel! Wait, there. It is I, darling—wait for me!"

"Robert! Robert!" answered the girl's voice, as if in the distance.

But he knew the meaning of the faint tones.

Exhausted at last, after a chase for hours, she had fallen helplessly and hopelessly at the side of the path.

When he reached his betrothed, he found a cry of gladness came from her dry lips, for she felt that she was now saved from the terrible fate.

"My father, my father's most savage bound—if I except two other bound which he purchased from Captain Digby, of Fredericksburg. He is a monster—Ah! I am out of breath!" and having raised her head to gaze at these new words, she sunk back upon the ground.

Again the bay of the advancing bound.

But now Ross noticed something in the accent that had not attracted him previously. There seemed to him to be a tenor of distress in the sound that issued from the red throat.

While listening for a few seconds, he became convinced that though the animal was following Ethel's trail, he was not coming swiftly, as a bound would if thirsty to secure a prey.

What could that mean?

Yes, slowly the beast was coming, yet fast enough to have kept him close, as it were, in Ethel's rear.

Robert's hand he waited.

Through the gloom he presently saw the bound coming.

And what he saw caused him to pause after holding his weapon before delivering the shot.

It was Durga.

Surely no beast of his kind ever pursued a human after the singular manner which marked his actions now.

Even in the uncertain light of that early hour of night and on the woody hill, Ross perceived that the animal was actually staggering in a blind way while he came forward, throwing his nozzle from side to side and anon back to the ground to sniff the trail; and almost constantly came from his nostrils those sounds that were part bark, part bay, part yelp.

While he stood lost in some wonderment, he actually permitted the dog to reach him, pass him and approach Ethel.

There was no faint note to indicate a savage glee in at last coming up with his quarry, no spring that follows the sighting of one upon whom he would hurl himself ferociously.

Instead, the great brute uttered a whine that contained something like an accent of delight, and began to lick the hand of the girl, laying nearly motionless in combined exhaustion and fear.

"Durga was making much over the girl, moving about her in a positively caressing manner."

Cursing in his astonishment, Ross lighted a match.

By its flickering flame the tale was told.

Durga's head was a sight to behold, covered with blood, and a closer glance revealed that both of his eyes had been completely destroyed.

To Ross the explanation was plain now.

It was the result of his encounter with Durga in the woods that morning. The brute's eyes had been destroyed by that terrible little engine of slugs and buckshot which the spy carried and worked with a match.

The dog, realizing his helplessness with almost human intelligence, and accidentally striking a trail, had followed in the anticipation of human, whose eyes he might be, would take pity upon and succor him.

All the fierceness of his nature was apparently gone with the knowledge that he was blind.

This condition of affairs he hastened to explain to Ethel.

Leading the dog by the ear, and supporting Ethel on his other arm, he returned to the tree where he had left Mildred.

On the way he asked:

"Why do I find you here, darling? What could have brought you from your father's house into the woods at such a time?"

Ah, Robert, I have had such an experience today as I hope never to have again. After you escaped from the inn, I must have been unconscious for awhile, for I was roughly treated, I can tell you, by those men who were in pursuit of you."

"The wretches!"

"When I recovered, I was on a lounge in the sitting-room below stairs, and I opened up my door, and I found that I had purchased two most savage bounds from a man named Digby. These bounds, it was known, would even eat a human, if they could catch the scent of the blood about that human. My hand had been severely scratched by the troopers on the stairs, and during the time I lay there, had oozed considerably."

When I closed my eyes to behold one of these bounds at my side, glaring at me with his awful orbs, and on his tongue traces of some of the blood which he had already licked from my hand, I realized that I was the center of the blood at its source, his next movement might be to spring upon me and tear me to pieces. I think the contemplation must have temporarily robbed me of my reason."

"I sprang up. At the same time a form leaped in at the window—the other bound. I then gave myself up for lost, indeed. But I never gave up, I resolved that I would not be taken so easily. I was in a remarkable way. This second bound, as if anticipating that its companion was about to enjoy a feast too wholly by himself, threw itself forward, and, uttering a howling growl, it gripped the throat of the other in its massive jaws, smothering thereby the answering growl that would have greeted him in the dispute over me."

"It was my chance. Though I was weak almost to helplessness, I managed to bound toward and out at the low window. Then, in the startled mood that had seized me, I ran in the direction of the window, and while pausing for a rest, I heard the bay of this bound, which I recognized as Durga, and was compelled to fly when I was detected that he was actually following my trail. Ever since, I have been fleeing, pursued by the animal and by a terror a thousand-fold more horrible. Ah, I am not wanting in ordinary bravery, Robert."

"But that you are not, darling," he inserted, remembering the heroism with which she had defied and detained the troopers at her father's inn.

"That to die by the fangs of a dog—oh, it makes me shudder."

"Well, while it appears now to have been a useless fright, no one can blame you. But the danger is over. And what shall we do with the dog? Shall put a bullet into—"

"No, no; I would not treat even this brute so cruelly."

"Let him be a mercy."

"Let him live. I will take care of him. See, he looks to us for succor in his helplessness."

And the poor brute, as he permitted himself to be led along, did actually seem to appreciate that those who had him would guide him through the darkness that had come upon him.

"As you will, darling. But stop here. I have a companion."

They had reached the tree wherein Mildred awaited his return.

"As you will, Mr. Ross?" called the girl from the shadow of the branch above.

"Who is it?" Ethel asked, as she recognized a woman's voice.

"It is Miss Mary, guided from Fredericksburg. She is seeking some one in the Union army. If you feel strong enough, Ethel, I shall leave the remainder of that task to you. You can take her to your father's house, and thence into Falmouth, where the Federal army is now fast arriving."

"Yes, I will do so. And when am I to see you?"

"As soon as possible. I must return to the town."

Mildred was released from her rather unpleasant position by the bough.

After making the two girls acquainted, and urging them to hasten into Falmouth, Ross paused long enough to imprint a parting kiss on Ethel's lips, then turned away toward the spot where he had directed the little boat after landing with Mildred.

CHAPTER XIV.

A NOVEL MEETING.

As the form of her lover vanished Ethel said:

"Come, let us be moving. I am strong now, though it was a fearful ordeal through which I passed, while my companion was followed the other's lead over the top of the hill toward Falmouth."

Ethel related her recent thrilling experience.

"And do you not stand in fear of that great animal?" was Mildred's question, when she had heard, and casting a glance of doubt at the brave which her companion was lending guilefully by one of his ears.

"Oh, no. He is blind, as I told you, and brute though he is, he has my sympathy. Some one has shot out his eyes. I pity him."

Ross had not informed her of the cause of Durga's losing his sight.

The inn-keeper's daughter was thoroughly familiar with the lay of the ground for miles around, and she was not. No time was lost by pursuing an unnecessary course to reach the tavern.

When they reached a part of the timber fringe through the openings in which it would have been possible to distinguish the large building on the slope below, Ethel paused short with a little cry.

Instead of her home, she saw a great heap of black and white smoking bones, where the embers gleamed and occasionally sparkled upward in the now fully settled night.

"What house was that?" queried Mildred.

"Mine—no, mine," answered Ethel tremulously. "I was born there, and now—" her voice ended in a half sigh.

"How could it have happened?"

"Who can tell. Let us go forward."

Approaching closer to the pile, they halted again to contemplate it.

Then Ethel suddenly cried:

"Look—oh—look there!"

Following the direction of her leveled finger, Mildred saw within the heap of ruins at one side, illuminated by the glowing coals of the fire, the ghastly remnants of a human skeleton, the bones of which had been almost entirely from the bones that were revealed in whiteness where they had not yet charred.

"Merciful Heaven! can it be that my father has perished thus horribly?"

"Do you think that your father would have remained within the house to meet such a death? He was not an invalid confined to his bed, was he?"

"No; and from that I shall gather some hope. Perhaps you are right in your thought; he may be at this moment alive and well. If so, he is likely in Falmouth. Come, I must find my father, for I loved him."

One more the couple started onward.

A short distance on they could perceive the camp-fires of the army arrived and arriving from another direction than the road they were following.

But they had not drawn very near to these beacon-lights ere there came a halting challenge.

"Who comes?"

"Friends—women," replied Mildred.

"Advance!"

Going forward, they found themselves confronted by a Union officer.

"I thought it was one of the pickets," Mildred said.

"And so it is, in a way. Where do you come from?"

"Fredericksburg."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I am seeking an officer in your army by the name of Durga, whom I have been informed, is here. This young lady is, presume, merely seeking to enter Falmouth for shelter, her home having been burned by you men, and I am during this day."

The officer to whom Mildred thus addressed herself was Harry Denver.

A portion of his regiment, including his company, had been detached for picket duty in the rear, but was at that moment making a round of the post, to see after their proper placing and vigilance.

It would be difficult to conceive, much less explain, the intense amazement that filled him, as he thus found himself talking to the very young lady, as he suspected, who was romantically connected with his own life.

And the next answer given to his immediate question was so suspicious.

"What is your name?"

"Mildred DeKay."

Yes, it was she.

And instantly he formed a rather airy resolution.

"You are desirous of entering the lines?"

"Follow me, then, for you may have to give some more satisfactory explanation regarding your presence here."

With which he wheeled and led the way in the direction of the gleaming fires.

Conducting them to his own tent, he said: "I shall risk leaving you here until I confer with the colonel. I would advise that you do not attempt to leave until my return."

"Be assured that we will obey."

At that juncture another officer appeared at the flap of the tent. As he looked in he called out:

"Denver—" pausing as he saw the two girls.

Then he withdrew having said what he intended.

And instantly Mildred asked, fixing her lustrous eyes on the young Unionist:

"Is your name Denver?"

"My name is Henry."

"Henry?"

"Henry," he repeated, "But you will excuse me. I am wanted. And while I am gone I will confer with the colonel concerning you two."

Starting from the tent, he met Captain Will Harding on the outside patiently waiting.

"Who have you got in there?" was the immediate interrogation of curiosity.

"A thousand guesses and you wouldn't know."

"Oh, I give it up; I am no hand at conundrums."

"One of those young ladies is the identical one I was telling you about to-day while our regiment was halted on the slope—"

"No?"

"But, yes, she has introduced herself to me—Miss Mildred DeKay, of Fredericksburg."

"Which one?"

"The shorter of the two."

"She knows then that she has stumbled on the man she is to wed by contract."

"Not a bit of it. I told her my name was Henry—she thinks it is the last name. Keep it dark; and do not ever call out my name while she is around."

"I shall do so, I shall do so," she vowed to some other tent of course, at once. I am not quite ready to introduce myself."

"Better quite right in," advised the impatient Will Harding.

But Denver had made up his mind at the first moment of ascertaining the identity of the beautiful girl, that he would not reveal himself until he had seen a little more of her.

He sought his colonel to consult regarding the disposition of the two females thus brought into camp on the eve of meeting the enemy.

"As he expected, that officer, who was a stern disciplinarian, immediately exclaimed:

"Pass them along, sir, pass them along; send them into Falmouth somewhere. We don't want female among the boys, at this time, to turn their heads."

"Their character is not of the kind to do that, colonel; they are undoubtedly ladies."

"Well, pass them along all the same. Let them find shelter with some of their own sex in the town."

Shortly after this Denver returned to the couple in his tent with the announcement:

"You cannot stay in camp, ladies; you must continue on to Falmouth. Here is a paper which will preserve you from molestation between here and there, and until you can reach some of your friends which you may probably find there."

Providing them with a passport, he led them from the tent and toward that portion of the road where the lights of his regiment terminated.

"Here I must leave you," he said, "I hope you may safely find some of your friends; and the pass I have given you may prove valuable—for you must recollect that all eyes are turned to you, to him there, and even among the boys in blue you might meet with a few troublesome rascals."

"We thank you, sir. But will you tell me before you part from us: do you know any one of the army by the name of Harry Denver?"

"I must say that I do."

"Then, if you should ever meet him, will you be kind enough to sort to him them. Mildred DeKay is searching for him? He will understand the few words."

"I will do so."

Then, as the two girls hastened away along the road, he stood looking after them with a peculiar smile on his handsome face.

"By Jove!" he muttered. "If she is as

good at heart as she is beautiful of feature, I must surely try and win her!"

CHAPTER XV.

CROSSING THE RAPPAHANNOCK.

On this night, which found Sumner's grand division in possession of Falmouth, it would have been an easy matter for the Union forces to cross the Rappahannock and take the town of Fredericksburg.

The Confederate General Lee, had not yet massed any considerable force to dispute the passage of the river; the frowning heights at the rear of the town were almost bare of the enemy after the brief preliminary engagement of the artillerists on the afternoon of that day.

But even with greater strategy was the Confederate chief, gathering in his hithered army for the struggle that was the more inevitable because of Burnside's delay.

Longstreet even then was forcing marches to reach the town.

When day dawned, it brought with it the arrival of the grand divisions of Hooker and Franklin to strengthen the Federal lines on the north of the river.

At that time they should not have been a matter of strengthening, as history shows, but of immediate action.

For on the morning of the second day following this, the heights behind Fredericksburg began to tremble for the first time.

Longstreet had come, his men eager for the fray; and the vantage lost by the Federal army was a matter of derision along the gray lines.

On the days passed, there came information from the daring spy who was ensconced in the midst of his foes, as it were—from Battery Bob, who effected many meetings with Sumner, the second day through him conveyed the intelligence of the rapid strengthening of the Confederate position which more and more showed that now the passage of the Rappahannock, or the taking of Fredericksburg, was to be a record of blood.

The month waned, and still the Unionists were there, irresolute on the river bank.

And when at last General Burnside resolved upon a bold attack in front at every hazard, he found that the day was before him with armor girded strong and trenchant, with the heights frowning down their artillery with the gleaming bayonets of his men ready to strike the charge. The night was Longstreet and his host there; Hill at Port Royal; Jackson between and ready to strike where he could do the most good.

In these few paragraphs the author may have struck a long leap from the tenth of the previous month to that date which signified the opening of the carnage.

But little of moment had passed with our especial characters, and the many names which were of the armies were essential to our narrative than the events which followed upon and subsequent to this night of December 19.

The Stafford Heights were crowned by the deadly batteries under Hunt; crowned, and the ominous nozzles directed upon the plain, the town and the heights on the opposite side of the stream, to hurl their missiles of destruction at the enemy's breast.

In the heavy fog of the night the pontoon trains were sent down.

The engineers began their work of constructing the bridge, believing themselves completely unobserved through the fog.

Among the troops that had accompanied the bridge builders to support them at their work were the companies of Captains Denver and Harding.

While the men reposed at rest on their arms, watching the busy figures out at the water's margin, suddenly there broke the sharp crack of a rifle from the shore opposite.

"God save me! I'm shot!" cried one of the busy workers.

Not so stealthily had been the movement but that they were seen by the alert foe at the water front of the town.

"Stick to it, lads," urged the chief of engineers, with but a quick glance at the fallen man.

But the words had scarcely left his lips

when again sounded the appalling crack—the dismal thud! that told of another mortal slain.

After these two shots the fire from the river bank and the shore posted protectively in the stone houses at that side of the town, poured upon them with a succession that savored of volleys at times.

The lead hummed and zipped around them.

Heroically they worked.

The bullets came faster, and the disheartened engineers listened wearily for the order that would relieve them from a duty where it was only a question of time before the last man of them would go down.

"It is a killing shame," said Denver to Harding, as they came together while their men were hurrying to the aid of the impregnable wall on the opposite side.

"Killing?—yes," dryly. "I'm thinking that we shall soon be wiped out to a man if we are not pretty soon taken away from this place."

Cutting short his speech he dodged, as he fairly felt the wind of a passing slug on his cheek.

"Mark!" exclaimed Denver.

There sounded at that instant a report of heavy ordnance in the direction of the Confederate host.

While its rumble still dwelt in the humid air, they could discern that dawn was at hand.

By this hour the shore was almost strewn with the dead, who had fallen before the missiles of Federal guns whom they could not see or injure in return.

At last came the order to cease work.

Only for awhile, then at it again; at it with the repetition of the deadly record and unavailingly of before.

Forward to work; then back again to shelter went the heroic engineers; and still came those leaden messengers from the stone annals of Fredericksburg which so effectually disputed the crossing.

There followed a period of rest under shelter, during which findings of the unavailing effort to construct the bridge was conveyed to the Federal command.

After a lapse of hours the order came to retire for the present.

As the demitted companies of Harding and Denver fell back, the latter found opportunity to say:

"I would rather take chances swimming the stream than to try that method any more."

"I—hello! hear that!"

Abruptly from the heights above them burst the sound of guns, these increasing their volume until it seemed as if the whole power of the batteries stationed there was being discharged at once.

And it soon became known that the fire was being directed in a bombardment on the town.

Through the fog, in the distance, could be seen a sluggish column of smoke that told of conflagration where the shrieking shells had set flame to the dwellings more probably of innocent people than in the midst of the foe that appeared incapable of being dislodged.

Round after round, gun after gun, in that almost incessant roar at the high-renting crests, and iron bars was fung from the city, as if it was doomed to demolition.

For presently appeared flames where the smoke was—not at a single point, but here and there, giving an appalling suggestion to the beholder that the town was being consumed and exploded in the hitherto quiet streets.

While the guns boomed on, again was the attempt made to finish the bridge that had already cost so many lives.

At last, however, from that terrible ambush at the water front of the town that sent along with every shot the defiant yell of a Confederate marksman, still safe from shore, a deadly arrow of fire was above could not be depressed to reach his lurking place.

It was after the terrible cannonade had lulled somewhat that the uselessness of such a course was revealed by the chief of artillery.

Then suddenly there burst into view a long line composed of three regiments; burst forward the ranks of the brave soldiers of blue which ascended a cheer so long and loud that it penetrated to the heights in the rear of the town, above the crackling volleys which replied to it from the butternut shades of the night.

Down the bank, onward they rushed, tumultuously, though in steady order; and then they reached the scant shelter of the remaining pontoons on the river bank, behind which they paused to send across many a shot that now could reach the merciless slayers of the night past.

Loud cracked the muskets of the brave boys, and the volleys of the party to partly avenge their fallen comrades.

And soon another cheer rent the air, as several pontoons loaded with the daring

To the time that had elapsed since the night when Captain Denver had seen the two on their way into Falmouth, Mildred had fully acquainted Ethel with the romantic history of her search for a man whom she was destined to marry if she would, obey the dying request of her father.

While in Falmouth, she had watched with no attempt to conceal her eagerness, for the approval of the young captain, who had introduced himself as "Henry," remembering his promise to communicate the fact of her search to Captain Denver, and feeling assured that Denver would seek her out when he knew that she was desirous of the meeting.

But Denver had had no opportunity, even if he had wished for it, to see more of the young girl which fate had seemed to have destined for his search.

As they entered the mansion, which seemed to have remained in every particular just as it had been left by her in her recent hurried flight, she remarked to Ethel:

"I am in possession of Fredericksburg, the man I wish to see will seek for me at the place he must know to be my home."

"I trust he may," said Ethel, with a little twinkle in her eyes, "for you appear to be thinking of him very absorbently."

"Is it not natural? You see, I feel as if there was a bondage upon me, and I am desirous of having it settled either one way or the other. I wish to see you, my dear and dearly loved friend"—for the two had grown almost sisterly in the time of their short intimacy—"if the man I expect to meet, and whom I may marry if we are both alive, is anything like the young officer whom we met out that night last month, I think I shall not find much difficulty in learning to love him. Do you not think he was noble looking?"

"Most certainly, though I have only suspected it so slightly as not to make it warrantable on my part to suggest it—I half believe that the captain you mention is the very man now under discussion as possibly your future husband."

"No," they are not in earnest!" exclaimingly interrupted the beauty, turning quickly to her companion.

"But I do."

"Do you not remember that he told you his name was Henry?"

"Yes, his last name, of course; and it would have been very indicative on my part to have inquired for his first name."

"I think differently."

"That such a question would not have been delicate?" in surprise.

"Oh, no, I did not mean that. I mean that I have a different opinion regarding the name."

"How? I can't understand."

"You said that the name of the man you had never seen, and yet might possibly marry, was Harry Denver."

"Yes."

"That young captain said his name was Henry. Harry is sometimes used for the name of Henry; and his last name may be Denver, as you have said."

"I never said that," exclaimed Mildred, impressed with this random reasoning of her new friend.

And she added:

"Then, if he had I ever met again, I will have a point settled, be assured," and it was plain that she was half inclined to accept the theory.

They had reached Mildred's private rooms by this time, and were about to arrange their toilet, when there was a sound of hurried footsteps in the hallway without.

Both turned with inquiring looks toward the door.

Somebody burst in without the ceremony of the knock which was always his custom, and immediately cried:

"Oh, Missy Mildred!"

"What is it, Snow?"

"Dar's man in de cellar!"

"In the cellar?"

"E-yes, indeed. I was a-goin' fo' to fetch somethin' fo' you to drink from ol' massa's wine, w'en, dar—dar was a man wot riz up right from de cellar, looks at me like he was a-goin' fo' to eat me right up, I swears it fo' de lamb!"

"What kind of a man, Snow?"

"Deed, Missy Mildred, I didn't stop fo' to look at de man in de cellar fo' sure."

"Let us see where he suggested Ethel."

"Very well," Mildred assented.

They descended the stairs to the narrow flight leading to the cellar.

The cellars of the DeKay mansion were

large and filled with casks that indicated a love of comfort on the part of the recently deceased owner.

Furnished with a light by Snow, who kept in the room, Ethel claimed the privilege of leading the way.

With her ever present revolver firmly held for an immediate shot, she proceeded upon an exploration.

As they bravely gone a dozen steps along the flagged flooring, when a gigantic form arose from behind a cask in her front—a form with a shaggy bearded face and eyes that were like the orbs of some hideous monster in the semi-darkness.

The face and form of Lieutenant Rory Bolt.

It chanced that the fray between him, his men and Battery Bob, was in a locality near the cellar, and he had, as he held with the others, he thought him of the expedient of entering the premises as a safer course to probably save his life from the Yankee bullets which were following thickly after him.

Among the garden gate open, he entered. And finding that the mansion was actually deserted, he proceeded to make himself comfortable after a manner.

Which consisted of an immediate visit to the cellar, where he knew, there was a plentiful supply of wine.

Seating himself among the casks, he turned the spigot of one near him and placed his capacious mouth to it, taking a long draught of the wine, he had here resulted in the death of an ordinary man.

"This is what I call enjoyment," he muttered, smacking his lips. "And, forsooth, here I mean to remain until the accursed Yankees are driven out of Fredericksburg, or until these casks are drained out. Here goes—destruction to the Yanks!" and again he drank heavily from the spigot.

Such potatoes inevitably resulted in his being sick, and he did not long before he sank over into a drunken sleep, there upon the hard stone floor.

From this sleep he had just aroused as Snow descended to procure some refreshments for his young mistress.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A CLOSE CALL FOR BOLT.

Having frightened off the negro, Bolt chuckled gaily and turned for the sixth time to the convenient spigot.

"So they have come home again—the young girl who is the heir of Arnold DeKay killed from his lips. Well, I don't think they will disturb me in this, the best treat of wine I have ever had in my life."

And he took a seventh drink from the spigot.

But Rory Bolt's idea that he might remain there unmolested was exploded a few moments later, when he saw that some one was descending the narrow way to the cellar.

Cautiously over the top of a cask he peered upon the comers with a light.

In an underbreath he muttered:

"Thunder and Satan, there is the daughter of the inn-keeper, Ethel Cobbs. How came she to be here? I don't see her carrying a pistol—a revolver. She is no child with the revolver. I have seen her shoot a man as well as I could have done myself. But I shall not be frightened from this comfortable place by the women of Ethel Cobbs. Here she is coming this way. I wonder, now, if I cannot frighten them—the inn-keeper's daughter and the girl I see is the owner of this mansion—in the same way I did the negro. I will make it so."

Having thus resolved, he suddenly arose before the explorers of the cellar as shown, at the same time raising one great hand aloft and uttering a dismal sound that was very different from a groan.

If he had hoped to intimidate Ethel Cobbs either by his noise, his appearance of gigantic stature, or his glaring eyes, he was thrillingly disappointed.

Promptly the girl raised her revolver to cover his broad breast, and she cried:

"Stand!"

In that instant it flashed upon Rory Bolt that he had never seen a more beautiful plot-line in his life than Ethel presented to his bloodshot eyes.

But of this he had no time to reckon. The deadly tube was leveled upon him, and he saw the dangerous glance in her eyes, and he saw that she would fire upon him the next instant.

"Hold there, blast it!" he ejaculated, excitedly. "You would not kill me, would you?"

"Stand, sir, and give an account of your presence here."

"An accident, I swear," he hastened to say, in his low-voiced voice. "I stumbled in here, I don't know where I was, I have been drunk. Look at my eyes, and you must see that I have been drunk. Lower that pistol, Ethel Cobbs, it might go off before you know it."

"Ah, I recognize you now," said the girl, while the flash in her eyes intensified. "You are one of those who were in pursuit of a man known as Battery Bob, at my father's house last month. Yes, I know you. So you were at a corner now, eh? Do you know, I have half a mind to bore you with a bullet for the part you played in that affair."

"Half a mind, say you?" Well, let the other half alone, and don't do that thing, Ethel Cobbs, I am not here as a kitten, I swear to you. Lower the revolver."

Ethel turned slightly toward Mildred and asked:

"Is there any other outlet to this place besides this way in our rear?"

"None."

"Then," said the girl, while her wary eyes were fastened upon Bolt, whom she addressed again, "step aside, while I make the best of my way out. I don't want a little feeling for such as you are, sir, and if you excite me in the least, I may even pull on this trigger before I know it."

"Soul of Satan! don't do that!" blurted the brave girl, who had so bravely braved danger if anything should happen to make the pressure of her finger on the trigger the least bit harder.

Just at that moment something transpired which brought a rather thrilling change upon the scene.

The old negro, Snow, in his curiosity to see the man who was being cowed by the brave girl, was craning his neck forward from the doorway on the joisted stairs.

Losing his balance before he was aware of it, he slipped, tripped, and came tumbling down with a half yell of dismay.

In his fall he struck against Ethel.

Ethel was jarred against Mildred.

The lamp was knocked from Mildred's hand; simultaneously the revolver exploded, and a shout that was a curse broke from the coarse lips of Lieutenant Bolt.

"Blast it! I am wounded!"

And but for the jar that diverted her aim, which she kept heretofore steadily upon the ruffian, the bullet might have done more than merely wound the Confederate.

A loud groan reverberated from Bolt.

In the darkness which ensued upon this accident, he saw an advantage for himself.

Quickly changing his position, he muttered, in an underbreath:

"Now I am in a safe place, but get out of here before that spit-fire of a girl takes a notion to bore me with a bullet, as she said she had half a mind to do, I will be fortunate. I think I can see the glimmer of a light back there."

With a stealth and noiselessness that was remarkable considering the weight of his great cavalry boots, he began making his way toward a faint glimmer of light which he could not see his position, though the position of the girls was such that it was secured from their vision by an angle in the foundation of the building.

And perhaps the voice of Snow, that was raised in a vain attempt to immediately and continuously warning the mishap to himself, aided the movements of the giant.

He succeeded in passing by the girls and drawing near to the faint glimmer, which was caused by the light which Snow had made in the parlor when Mildred and Ethel first arrived.

Faint, but sufficient to bring him to the joisted stairs; and then with sudden and great leaps, he escaped from the cellar, running up the stairs as easily.

At the same time, he heard the sound of shots on the street without, which told that even with the fall of the night's shadows, there was still a desultory fire progressing.

He was now in the street.

Hardly had he reached the gate which had afforded him an ingress earlier, when he was checked and somewhat startled by a surly growl from a dog.

A deep and ominous growl, followed by a snap of powerful jaws, and Bolt felt his flesh being torn by sharp teeth.

A cry that was a roar burst from him.

"Thunder and Satan! it is the blood-hound that Bolt Cobbs started to run down the Yankee spy!"

Durga it was!

The brute's presence there was purely and singularly accidental, Ethel having left him

In Falmouth when they decided to enter Fredericksburg after its capture by the Federals.

The blind beast had escaped from those with whom she had left it in charge, and in its roomings had come into the garden of the Union army, after having fallen into the river and swam across, aimlessly.

Had Durga been the animal that it was before losing its sight, Rory Bolt could not have done what it did. It was like a single terrible wrench from the fangs fastened in the flesh above his foot.

Hurling himself free from the dog, he ran out at the gate.

He lay dependent upon the dark street, bullets were flying at intervals around, and one of the little pellets of lead pierced his hat, knocking it from his shaggy head.

"Blasht it! I shall be killed yet, I am afraid," he spluttered, as he stretched his long legs in flight.

And not until he was well across the canal did he relax his running gait, or venture time for a glance behind to see if he was pursued.

A busy night was that with the Union army.

The pontoons were now nearly all completed without any further resistance.

As the night advanced, other corps were crossing the Rappahannock to the southern side, at the city; and, below, the men of Franklin were fast massing for the attack. A heavy cover was being thrown, that settled down over land and water like a dull gray pall.

When day came again, it found the Federals ready for a battle, and the exception of the Union's grand division, having formed on the south bank of the stream, and showing a menacing front to the quiet but grimly waiting foe.

The scouts were now busy; and spyrest among them was Simmons, who seemed gifted with an almost supernatural ability for bringing information regarding the Confederate position and movements on the distant heights of heights.

Simmons now wore a garb of Union blue. With the exception of his broad brimmed hat, and the fact that he carried a rifle of monstrous and heavy barrel, he was like the rest of that vast array of boys in blue—a seeming private from the ranks.

With the men of Franklin, where Simmons was busiest at his daring work, there was fast coming a silent waiting for the word that was to open; the eyes beneath the Union caps roamed afar and ahead as if to penetrate the fastnesses of the gray clad enemy, and every hour that elapsed was an increase of the suspense, until many were heard to murmur:

"I wish the thing would come."
"And I. I'd rather be in the battle than wait here thinking about it."

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW THE BOYS WENT "IN."

Dull with haze was the December day that came to receive the record of the opening struggle at Fredericksburg.

Through the foggy air the marching lines were reaching and counter-marching for position to open the attack which had been ordered by General Burnside.

Beyond the clouded space of air the etidals built by the Confederate army on the heights were visible, and the yawning mouths that were ready to receive and destroy them were cloaked from view, though there were grim warriors there with fingers on musket locks and grips on deadly long yards, the tightening of which was soon to rouse and rend the atmosphere with roars of thunder.

"Forward, guide center—march!" Swiftly here and there the marching lines. At every step, at every command rising on that early morning, the teeth of men were clinching together tighter as they felt themselves coming nearer and nearer to the moment of battle.

Brave were they, the blue and the gray; but there is something in the suspensive moments preceding the outburst of a carnage such as that in store, which may cause even the bravest to experience a strange thrill not without its dread.

"Forward, guide center—march!" Slowly over the plain that stretched below Fredericksburg wheeled, grimly, the onsliding martyrs.

Slowly forward through the uncertain light the divisiou of gallant Meade, as the fog began to lift, and his gleaming bayonets shone in long lines like waves of steel that

swayed beneath some stealthily waiting breeze.

Then at last burst the first sound of the bloody day.

On the plain left roared up the thunder from the waiting horse artillery of Stuart. Into the ranks poured the iron from this point on their flank.

Mercedless iron—for the men began to fall, and that short shower of agony on that day now ascended to the skies amid the rumble of the guns.

Simultaneously the Federal batteries opened.

Snaps and shells were shrieking overhead as well as below in the blue front; the heights were being stormed by artillerists, and in a way that caused many a graycoat to bite the dust before it came far to fire upon the advancing and hated Yankees.

Into the ranks of blue went the shots from Stuart.

Into the fastnesses of leafless oak and tall pines, the shells that burst and scattered among men and trees, and scattered their still burning particles in the undergrowth.

And there were cries of agony in the unbroken ranks of the Confederates, as the terrible fragments from belching throats came whistling and howling into the midst of them, sowing death in the shelter of the woods.

Boomed the batteries of Stuart—boomed and under the hoys in blue, until it seemed that they could progress no further without being slain to the last man.

When suddenly there wheeled aside on the already bloody plain a lone front of blue that marched steadily, directly into the Union's mouth at first, then with a rousing cannon cheer charged upon the foe that had peppered them from the flank with heavy loes.

Charged, silenced and driven back into inactivity those terrible guns that had met and slain them as they advanced to attack the corps of Hill, ensconced on the grim heights.

Then back again into the regular advancing lines—on before a foe that waited but had not yet replied either to the roaring artillery or the flaming muskets of the Union, as they were using the woods at the ascent in a very multitude.

Among these skirmishers was the form of Simmons, the scout, in his suit of blue.

Starting suddenly to lead, he was some distance the van, his trusty rifle now sending a bullet at every opportunity where he could see a Confederate lat or limb.

Well known to the men, and popular on field or camp, the eyes were on him, while their muskets barked loudly, oftentimes at a foe whose position they could not see, but only guessed at.

"Come on, boys!" shouted the daring scout. "Come on! Give it to them lively!"

But though Simmons thus called cheerily, he was too old a man in battle to misunderstand that ominous silence which prevailed in the Confederate fastnesses.

He well knew that shortly would come the flame, the smoke, the lead and iron that was to engulf the bodies of heroes in a swimming tide of blood.

He well knew that his voice could be heard ringing out, and at times there was a cheer of encouragement from the following skirmishers, as they caught the spirit of his enthusiasm and pressed on, on with still bolder hearts, still so brave, until they were forging up the heights.

And yet no sound from the half-concealed enemy.

The fact gave an additional courage to the men.

But Simmons was not deceived. At his side was a young soldier who had stuck pretty close to him from the first, as if to come out with him during.

"Look out, my lad," Simmons said, with a bait to his head sideways to the young fellow as he drew back the hammer of his rifle for another shot. "Look out! It seems comparatively quiet now, but keep your eyes skinned for signs. There'll be a wave of flame begin to burst out of the hills presently, unless I'm mightily mistaken, and if you can catch sight of it in time, go down and get the word to the men, or you're a goner. Mind me, now—"

His speech terminated with the last word, which was jerked out short as he raised his rifle and fired upon a soldier just past that was struggling from behind a tree.

The leg of a Confederate.

And immediately upon the shot came a yell of pain which even these two, so far in advance, and so near to the enemy, could scarcely hear for the din which was progress-

ing off in rear and left, where, in the latter instance, the detachment sent to silence the battery of Stuart was returning to form in with the rest now almost at the base of the heights.

Behind Meade was the support of Gibbon. Two great waves of blue humanity advancing across that smoky plain upon a foe that held an eternal silence, yet who was known to be there in force.

Then, as the men of Meade came through a lifting of the smoky cloud, suddenly they were apprised of the fact that the gray host was there as terribly there.

Upon the air burst a shock like an earthquake, a sound of heavy guns that hurled shell and canister into the lines, mowing, mowing, mowing, mowing, and glancingly snaps in the oncoming ranks.

In with the guns, the bang and volley of musketry, the whistling slugs, and now the well known Confederate yell saluted the Federal heroes with a shrillness that outdid the rumble of the battle growing warmer with each passing second.

Now, indeed, the hot work had begun.

"Close up! close up!" screamed the intrepid officers.

Into the gaps, over the dead bodies of comrades, swerved the survivors.

And still on, on, intrepitly on, into the jaws of the flaming bill marched the boys in blue.

Again the thunder of death, again the shrieks that caused the blood in the pulses of the bravest to stand still for an instant. But the boys in blue were not to stand back from other officers, for the first had fallen among their slaughtered men:

"Close up! close up!"

And close up it was, and still on.

Now they were at the railroad.

Into the batteries there, and perhaps there was something like an universal curse upon the lips of these powder-stained warriors as they charged up the plain, the guns which had sailed upon the death of the merciless cannons' mouths.

Back went the host of gray before the wrathful avengers—back and up the hill-side.

Still shrieked the shelling batteries in the Union rear, to make more powerful the advance of these men who were proving themselves wonderful on that day.

Still the Union line, as the musketry of the hard pressed Confederates.

And on, on, up the hill toward the plateau beyond, marched the long lines of blue, forward to the heights of death, forward to the maelstrom of blood.

Back in turn went the butternut host of Lane before such men as they who had marched across the plain to strike the grimly lurking foe.

Then the plain was left behind; Meade had penetrated the fastness; his men, even in the carnage around them, gathered spirit from their sturdy progress, and the Union cheer reached to Jackson's ears in an ominous way.

After Lane, Archer! Flank after flank went back! On, on, the gallant men of Meade!

Earth, the air, the trees, even the stray stones that lay upon the wintry carpet of a hitherto Hercynian grove, seemed to be vomiting fire and flashes—fire flashes and death for the blue and gray.

At close quarters was the fight, where friend and foe were being enveloped in the sulphurous breath of powder.

The Federal artillery had ceased. The troops were "in," frightfully in; so that a single firing now would be to kill their own men.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE BOYS CAME OUT.

Another cheer—one of those Union cheers that can by volume make itself heard even in the after pages of history—presently broke through the air, and the men were caught in the branches of the trees around and held there with a prolonging tenor.

Firing to right and left, wedged in between the scattering front of Lane and Archer, the Union troops were kept the Confederates that many threw down their arms, and shortly following came the surrender of hundreds of butternut suits and the capture and trampling of Confederate standards.

Booms and triumphant cheers after that scene of blood.

A scene of blood still, for the men of Meade—gallant Meade!—were pressing forward through the smoke, and the Confederates, who had been showered upon them from every covert, on, to the military road.

Alas, that famous road! For presently there came in the front of the so far victorious Federals such a fire as no man or body of men could withstand—fire that carried with it fresher death, fresher sights of mangled limbs and horror. The division of Early was there; the second line of Jackson was there!

Gray-clad soldiers, who were fresh and eager for the fray.

For presently there came in the front of the so far victorious Federals such a fire as no man or body of men could withstand—fire that carried with it fresher death, fresher sights of mangled limbs and horror.

The division of Early was there; the second line of Jackson was there!

Gray-clad soldiers, who were fresh and eager for the fray. For presently there came in the front of the so far victorious Federals such a fire as no man or body of men could withstand—fire that carried with it fresher death, fresher sights of mangled limbs and horror.

Next the troops of Gibbon wavered. And next fell back, hunk, until there came a moment of confusion amid that storm of shot and shout and smoke that appeared to speak an annihilation for the heroes. Still survived the spirited advance of Meade.

Again a welcome cheer. Birney was there.

From a front that stood like adamant there broke a new flame, backed by instantaneous bayonets, that sent a check into the exuberant Johnnies, sent a record of death that caused them to strain their eyes through the battle-smoke to discover at times the place in the ranks they had lost by the disappearance of charging comrades at their side.

Thousands lay on that field, on the plain, and in the woods where the still firm Jackson sought to receive the next advance of the Federal host.

Thousands dead and dying. And while the shattered troops withdrew to reform on the sanguinary plain, they heard in their gurgles and coughs and slaughter off to the right, where Couch was assailing Longstreet on his grim heights and behind his almost utterly impregnable intrenchments.

The prior shelling of the woods by the Federal batteries had in many places resulted in an ignition of the undergrowth.

From the stubble to the trees, had the sly flames licked and insinuated themselves, crackling here and there amid the screen of smoke from the powdery discharges, until at last there was a considerable fire in progress in the vicinity of the railroad.

In the midst of this was a human figure—a man in blue, who seemed to be deserted by his comrades, and wounded severely, for he crawled along with almost superhuman effort away from the immediate spot of the recent and painful picture of carnage.

Around his head was a bloody bandage. His face was white as death.

At times, as he crawled, he would pause and raise one hand gripingly to his breast, as if to keep away something that would cause him an unutterable anguish of body and spirit.

His lips looked dry, and his eyes had to him an expression not exactly of terror, yet of intense desire to escape from those who were charging his comrades down the slope and over the slippery plain.

The man was the blue-clad scout, Simmons.

Suddenly, painfully he was dragging himself along, his eyes turning to Heaven through the bare tree-tops at times, as he murmured:

"I've got it at last! Oh, God, have mercy on me for what little of wrong I may have done in this world. I know I cannot carry this terrible hole in my breast. The blood is flowing, flowing. Soon old Simmons will be no more. But I've done my duty as a soldier, yes, I know I have. Have mercy on my soul, Oh, God!"

Grasping tufts and undergrowth, tediously he was making his way, and all the time around him was creeping that red and flaming fire of death, that seemed to carry crackling, lapping sound, like the soft wash of an ocean's waves on the shore, the soldier in blue was not even to die by that frightful wave, but his way was paved by the tongues of flame that were each moment growing larger, spreading, licking, lapping, coming closer upon him as he struggled with his dying struggle to reach a little open, a short distance ahead.

At such a struggle for a man who, a few brief hours previous, had been in all the vigor of health and strength, the bravest of the

skirmishers who advanced upon the gray host ahead of Meade.

At every weary foot his strength appeared to lessen. At last he paused at the side of a great log that chanced in his way, and with a gasp upon it, half raised himself to glance back over the tortuous route he had come.

Behind him, a merciless foe, who, in the heat of conflict, might not consider that he was a dying man, and would hasten his death either with a merciless bullet or the stinging prod of a bayonet.

For he was totally unarmed; his rifle gone, his belt, at the belt, miserably, now discharged to the last chamber.

The fearful shudder of his frame showed itself in his pallid face as he cast that hopeless glance around him.

He tried to drag himself closer to the log. The effort was weak, and he sunk down again, with eyes fixed upon the creeping flames that were coming nearer and nearer to engulf him—flames in the trees overhead, flames on the ground, creeping, crawling, relentless flames that must soon reach his clothing, even though he could have continued that slithering flight.

And the little red tongues advancing, upon the boughs overhead that were crisp as the fire drew near, his eyes were turned rovingly, and through his soul thrilled the thought:

"Am I to die thus? Have I been the scout, the soldier that I have, to die at last, not on the field of battle, but in this terrible destroyer that leaves no trace of the man who died, and no record of the deeds of fighters. It is too hard. Ha! what's that?"

An expression came into the agonized face.

Simmons pricked his ears. And well he might; for it seemed as if the horror of his surroundings was not yet full. A new sound broke upon his hearing.

The retreating Federals were now far back down the slope they had conquered after so much bloodshed; it would have appeared that this wounded hero might escape the additional torture of meeting with a thirsty and excited foe.

And then he heard now brought the blood almost quivering through his veins.

It was the deep bay of a bloodhound, that arose in the midst of the fire in his rear, and there were shouts accompanying the voice, and there was that occurred of the plantation, which increased the whiteness of his features.

"A bloodhound!" he gasped. "There is a bloodhound in that track and with him some of those Carolinians, no doubt, who would flay even a dying man. Hear their shouts. Oh, God! give me strength to at least get within the lines, that I may die a soldier's death."

He assayed again to crawl forward.

But the attempt was futile.

Simmons was done for; not another foot could he move.

With compressed lips he turned his head in the direction of the approaching sound, which was at a slight angle from the slowly engulfing fire, and through his teeth he muttered:

"Death is death after all! I have not long to live! Let it come—the bound, or the bayonets of the murderous rebs. Let it come. I am ready. And I shall die as I have lived."

Just then he caught sight of the bound whose notes had startled him.

Bounding forward through the trees was a man, a terrible foe, appearing rather as if maddened than as if in pursuit of a trail.

Behind the dog were a half dozen forms in gray who were shouting, it seemed to Simmons, in a manner of triumph or positive exultation.

He closed his eyes heavily, having nerved himself for the horrible death that was imminent.

And that sort of death was not in store for the brave scout.

The dog was the blind and wandering Durga.

He was pursued himself by a crowd of blood-clad Confederates who had strayed from the ranks.

And as the dog and the Johnnies came in sight of the wounded scout, simultaneously there was raised to the sky a shout of triumph, gave Simmons a thrill of unspeakable hope.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WOODS ON FIRE.

At an angle from one side approached the Confederates.

At an opposite angle was raised the figure of a man on a full run.

Midway between the two angles thus formed, and not yet within the radius of the burning woods, was the huge dog, Durga.

Simmons was unaware of the fact of the animal's having lost its sight; he only recognized in the dog's stride and its gaze far worse than even the relentless foes in gray.

His eyes were riveted upon the single man who was coming on at a run, and who seemed to be looking for the spot where he lay.

This man he presently saw was Robert Ross.

At about the same time he discerned the brother Unionist, drawing near, the Confederates espied him also, and their gaze fast searching ahead of the racing course being pursued by their enemy, they next saw the wounded and apparently helpless soldier by the log.

A shout went up from them that was one of savage elation.

In the same moment, Simmons, who realized that they were now making surely toward him, raised his voice in a cry for succor.

"Battery Bob!" he called, with all the remaining strength he possessed.

And the answer came back, while yet the bold scout kept his eyes striding along.

"All right, old fellow, I'm coming!"

"Haste, Battery Bob, or I may be tortured by both dogs and men. Haste!"

"Oh, I can keep right along!"

While the words were yet on his lips, he sprang into the little circle that was partially clear around the log and halted, breathing hard, at Simmons's side.

"Thank you, my dog, my scout aspirated, with emotion. 'I will at least die a soldier's death after all.'"

"You're not dying, I hope," Ross interrupted.

And a glance down at the blood-wet blouse of the other as he put the question, showed him that Simmons was indeed near to his last moment on earth.

"Only keep them off until I am dead," Simmons pleaded, as if he fully believed in the ability of Battery Bob to do that thing with the scattered and small squad of Confederates who had quickened their pace as they saw a prospect of capturing one of the Yankees, if not both.

For from that distance they could not distinguish that one of the blue clad pair was wounded.

"The dog, the dog!" Simmons warned, as the note of the staggering bloodhound rose again and louder, closer at hand.

"Have no fear of him, assured Ross.

"That is the best, you saw me meet in the woods last month. My little machine shot out his eyes. He is as harmless as a kitten."

"And have you the machine with you?"

"Why, do you not observe its precious little hind wheel turning round, the better might see he were again that bump, which, on a former occasion, had converted itself into a most formidable battery."

"I am glad of that," said the scout, wearily and half closing his eyes in weakness.

"Have courage," said Ross. "The Johnnies are almost on us. But there are not many of them; and I think I can surprise them."

With a coolness that was at first astonishing to the rapidly advancing graycoats, Battery Bob awaited them.

Then they showed, suddenly again, as they thought, in his action that he meant peaceably to surrender.

The next instant they were undeceived.

"Come on, Johnnies!" hallooed the spy.

"I am here, I am here, you a little further, that is more lively than pills. I think I can whip about a score like you. Hurry up there, and let the ball open. Oh, I'm just dying to make your acquaintance."

The blind bloodhound, hearing voices ahead, had turned aside in his flight, for it had been a flight from the goadings of the Confederate when they ascertained that he was unable to get near to the wounded man.

The men in buttoned suits slackened their gait, though still advancing.

The words of the bold Union boy had struck them strangely; perhaps he was not so much the foe as the others, his comrades might be in the undergrowth beyond, separated, as he appeared to be, from the retreating Union lines.

But they still came on.

And one cried:

"You'll know us soon enough, you cussed Yank! We're just looking for you and a few more like you."

"And I am right here ready for a grand levee. Come on."

They were now not more than thirty feet from Ross.

Reaching the little clearing several of them paused outright.

"Come on, boys," urged the others, still pressing forward, and not understanding this move of hesitation.

A murmur went up from those who had stopped.

"The warning in the murmur was the cry:

"It's Battery Bob, of Antietam."

"Well, well! Battery Bob him an' bobtail him, too. Forward!"

"Not me, for onward!" another began to say; then he cut short the speech and blurted forth: "Look out! It's Battery Bob, I tell you, an' if you ain't s'pry you'll be peppered to death, with his guns and maddening shells the man who uttered the warning took to the shelter of a tree as fast as his legs could carry him.

The warning was unheeded by the few who as yet knew nothing of Battery Bob or his machine.

On they came with renewed leaps—now not twenty feet separated them from the man they were confident of capturing.

But as the sudden change came to the scene. The terrible hump on the back of the spy was turned toward them; up went the flap of the double-backed coat—an—

Whirr! twirr—whirr—rr—

A few moments of sound began as we have seen it begin before when Ross was in danger.

The result was as formerly.

A thick shower of small slugs hurried with a murderous force, met the Confederates fully in the face.

Instantly the woods were filled with howls of pain.

Some threw up their arms, turned and fled in an aimless way that indicated they might now be like Durga, robbed suddenly, awfully, as forever of their sight.

Some sunk to the earth; and these last Ross had never before received a portion of his wonderful discharge fairly in their startled brains.

Again had Simmons, the scout, an opportunity to witness the ingenious contrivance of Battery Bob's hump at its formidable work. Even in his rapidly falling moment, he uttered strength to exclaim:

"Good—good! Give it to them. Ah, if I but could, I would go to lead and fire my dear old rifle, I would help you, in that piece of amusement, Battery Bob!"

At this point, those who had wisely taken cover, instantly upon the heels of the first, were about to encounter, broke forth and took to their heels in a lively flight.

For there came a brief lull in that whirling, rattling, slug-slugging machine, during which there was an opportunity to escape.

Several of the Confederates were on the ground. The others, appalled by this unexpected style of warfare, fled precipitately, terrified, with scared glances over their shoulders at the single man who could thus so easily meet the assault of nearly a score.

Ross indulged in a low laugh as he watched the routed men in gray.

"Guess they won't try that on again, Simmons; do you think they will?"

There was no response.

He glanced quickly down at the now position of the scout and repeated the question.

As no reply came to the second remark, he stooped, with a feeling within him of what he was about to find, and peered into the corner look at the white and drawn face told the tale.

Simmons had passed from earth and the sound of war.

Hands of war that was then breaking afresh in the vicinity of Marye's Heights, where the Confederate guns were sweeping the plain below, sweeping the ranks of brave French who were advancing in the bloody madstrom, roaring louder and louder each moment from the impregnable crests.

Thick and murderous mowed the cañister through the married battalions there—yet the firing, as they went, into the cannon's mouth, into the jaws of a very hell of fire that seemed crossed within itself, its missiles so dense that they were themselves turned aside in contact in mid-air. The French and French brigades of Hancock, filling up the gaps in the ranks gone before—great gaps that occurred rapidly with every passing moment, until the scene looked more like a scene of wholesale slaughter than the shock of an army with the grimy foe.

Still on, while those minutes of death seemed like torturous hours to the wavering boys in blue who found themselves fighting and gave them no opportunity to strike back.

Ah! the shrieks, the hoarse din of the terrible, the ghastly and appalling picture of these thousands perishing in rivers of blood before the heights of Fredericksburg!

Noble Second corps! men who could go no further in the face of the showers and waves of iron mowing them down, yet who would not retreat, but stood there as if planted in the gory spot—spectacle of heroic manhood defying, as it were, the scythe of the horrible carnage.

Next the division of Howard. Next the divisions of Sturgis and Getty, all "in," all adding fresh victims to the hall of destruction booming, tearing, plowing the ranks of the thousands in the flames from the rifle trenches and the memorable stone wall.

CHAPTER XXII.

AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

From the quivering earth to the weeping sky the air seemed to hold with an awful holocaust of roaring and firing battle.

Farther the hills and the adjacent river rumbled the loud booming guns and the volleying musketry.

Dead and dying round—over them at times, as if they were doing nothing in the track of the wheels, the batteries flew hither and thither along the Union front, searching for a position whence they might hurl back some of that frightful destruction upon the reception of the Federal army.

Volcanic heights—terrible plains—shuddering sounds at Fredericksburg.

Then more, still more, into that yawning doom of death.

For the men of Humphreys were seen advancing through the smoky flashes, advancing steadily and with white faces over the moaning masses on the plains—forward into the breach left by the dead and dying battalions of Hancock.

Forward bravely, then, impetuously, with charging bayonets and ringing cheer that was taken up along the whole line.

Many fell with that last forlorn cheer on their lips, to rise no more, or lay whithering with torn and bleeding bodies amid the prodigious carnage.

And painful as the grim death into which they were fast sinking, was the sound, the sight, presently, that told them they were perishing through the confusion dying as they were dying before them by the stone wall and the ditches, where the enemy had so often during the day, and now again, driven the boys in blue back from the base of the hill, where the corps of Lee stood, yet fresh, yet hardly used in the slaughter of the hours past, looked down on the work of the gunners and the advance line with a savage triumph.

Back, back, the men of Humphrey—back in a disorder that was nearly a panic.

And well might it have been a panic, where they could accomplish nothing, but saw themselves going down in bleeding heaps under the cloud of smoke, under those vomiting mouths of flame and iron and roarings.

It was a welcome thing that night at last drew down upon the heated and blood soaked earth the corps of Lee again.

And with its darkness, General Burnside still planted, while in consultation with his officer, for the hours to pass by and bring another day, but he could again order the boys and cannon, again send into the whirl, the dissonance and carnage of the plain, the brave men who survived by a miracle the horrifying work of the guns on the day just past.

Night over plain and crest, night over the little town that was now of historic and bloody fame.

The two captives, Harry Denver and Will Harding, but figured conspicuously amid the sanguinous clash of arms.

Harding's whole company had been swept away; of the veterans who had followed and fought with Denver at Antietam, not more than a dozen of his company remained.

A sad night and those who could mourn the loss of brave comrades, and they paid silent tribute to the fallen heroism.

While the battle waged the DeKay mansion was tightly closed, and to all appearances unoccupied.

But in the small cupola on the roof Ethel Colburn and Mildred were busy with spy-glasses watching the scene afar, where the bluish transparent rents in the floating, billowing, fairly rocking smoke revealed to them the devastation that was going on hour after hour with no apparent result but the slaughter of the disheartened soldiery.

"Is it not awful?" exclaimed Mildred, without removing her eye from the spy-glass.

"Awful, indeed, and I know Robert must be there in a sick bed of it all."

"How do you know?"

"Because he is as brave a soldier as any there."

"But you said he was more particularly engaged as a scout. And he must be a very successful one; he was for some time a visitor at this house in the guise of a reverend gentleman under the name of Samuels. So clever was the disguise that I am sure I never should have penetrated it but for the adventure which caused him to reveal himself to me."

"And have you heard nothing of that captain, the friend of whom you spoke as a disagreeable admirer?"

"Fortunately, no; and I do not want ever to see him. After that little episode I think the mask is fallen from him; he may come of a proud and gentlemanly stock, but he is certainly not perpetuating the latter attribute. Oh, look at the frightful battle!"

"May Heaven preserve my Robert if he is here—and I feel that I can breathe Ethel, earnestly, as she continued, like her companion, to watch the distant scene of smoke from which constantly burst and reverberated the explosion of guns and muskets."

In the mind of Mildred DeKay there was an almost similar prayer passing.

"I trust Heaven may guard the man whom I now suspect, as does Ethel, to be the man my father destined me to marry. I already admire the young and handsome officer, indeed, I should be disappointed if he proves not to be the one we both think him to be. May Heaven preserve Captain DeKay!"

When twilight drew down the two girls retired from the cupola to the lower portion of the house.

As they entered Mildred's dressing-room the faithful old negro appeared to say:

"I see dose ix up something fo' you's supper, Missy Mildred."

"Thank you, Snow. We will be down in a few moments."

Old Snow, the only servant now in the mansion; he was a fortunate specimen of darky who can turn a hand at almost anything, and took upon himself to make up all the messes for his beloved young mistress.

Pausing to give a few touches to their toilet, the girls descended the staircase to partake of the refreshments spread in the dining-room.

As they passed the parlor door Mildred observed that the room was in darkness.

"Wait," she said, "I might as well make a light now, and when we're through take we can come in to see it."

Ethel paused off the threshold while Mildred entered.

The young girl struck a match and lighted a large and magnificent lamp that was upon the table.

The next instant a startled cry broke from her lips.

Both saw the form of a man at that moment in the act of entering the parlor from the garden by the veranda, the slight fastenings of the latter having apparently been easily forced.

This man was Lieutenant Vane Artwell. But he did not now wear his officer's uniform.

His garb was that of a citizen.

Immediately upon finding himself discovered, and perceiving who by, Mildred until the next moment in, was that gave her countenance the expression of a grin.

"Good evening," he saluted, coolly, advancing across the room toward her as he spoke.

"Vane Artwell, what means this intrusion?"

"You call it an intrusion? Why, you once received me as one of your most honored visitors."

"That time is past, sir. Such can never be the case again."

"Rather a stern edict," he said, with some sarcasm.

"Unalterable, at least," she retorted.

And she added:

"I would be obliged to you if you will leave the house."

He raised his brows.

"What, you order me out?"

"I do."

Ethel here came forward. She wished to have a good look at this man, who she had heard had been as a tutor, and a very impetuous one at that.

Artwell gave the girl no more than a swift, momentary glance.

"Listen to me for a few seconds. Mildred—"

"The style of address is distasteful to me, sir," she interrupted, sharply.

"Well, Miss DeKay, then. Listen to me. I have not come here to resume reference to a subject which you have so emphatically given me to understand was an annoyance to you. Will you let me speak?"

"Be brief, then."

"When the Yankees entered Fredericksburg, I was unfortunately in a house on the river front. Before I could take steps to imitate a retreat of the Mississippi companies, I found myself cut off from them. I have since remained in hiding. I might easily have been captured and every accused Yankee in the town is fixed upon the plain below the heights, I ventured to steal forth in this citizen's garb, and sought this house, which brings me nearer to my own men, when opportunity shall occur to permit of my making the effort to reach them. I had not intended to let you so much as know that I was on the premises. But since you have expressed me at any entering, I will say what was my intention. I know that on the wine in the cellar I could have subsisted until the Yankees are driven back across the Rappahannock, as your assistance would. So we would suspect the presence of a Confederate officer concealed, at this time, in the cellars of the DeKay mansion. I shall alter my intention slightly, now. I think, and the permission of you to remain in the house, only until a fitting chance presents itself for my getting to my regiment. And I promise you that I will not refer to the matter which has been the cause of unpleasantness between us. Will you grant me what I ask?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DUEL.

Mildred looked him steadily in the face while he was speaking.

She saw that he was in earnest; she saw that he made the promise with the intention of adhering to it.

Still she wavered between the propriety of permitting him to remain secreted under her roof and the uncharitableness of sending her forth to be captured, beyond a doubt, by his enemies.

"Would it not be rather unkind to deny a soldier shelter from his foes, no matter what his cause?" queried Ethel, with the observant and sympathetic air of her companion.

"Perhaps you are right," Mildred admitted, while she still held the lieutenant under her searching gaze.

"Now, after another moment—"

"Lieutenant Artwell, I will grant your request; but do not be deceived into imagining that it is because I entertain the least friendliness for you, personally, I recognize only the charitable plea—why this young lady suggests. You may remain within the house until you have a chance to rejoin your regiment. I would accord the same privilege, remember, to the lowest private in the ranks. I will see snow and have him prepare a room for you. Please be seated, and I will send him to you with his instructions."

"Thank you," he said, with a bow. "I am sure that I shall be quite safe here—"

"Not as safe, sir, as you may imagine."

All started at the unexpected voice filled the room.

Artwell wheeled and saw standing at the open window of the veranda a young and handsome Federal officer; presently, in the background, another of similar rank.

The two spoke in a low tone, the soldier wide open. In a time like this, we are constantly on the lookout for stragglers, and thought perhaps there might be some secreted in the garden. Entering, we were attracted by many words which seemed to point out from the open window: "Accursed Yankees!" That at once aroused us. We came to the window in time to hear enough to convince us that this party is a Confederate soldier in disguise. More I have heard from a man known as Battery Bob about a person named Vane Artwell who has caused you a great deal of annoyance. I am glad that I find the opportunity to tell you of him, and his glance rested peculiarly on the disguised lieutenant.

"Pardon such an unceremonious manner of entering," he said, removing his hat and addressing Mildred.

Adding:

"I and my brother officer here were coming to the mansion, Miss DeKay, when we chanced to see a Confederate soldier going wide open. In a time like this, we are constantly on the lookout for stragglers, and thought perhaps there might be some secreted in the garden. Entering, we were attracted by many words which seemed to point out from the open window: "Accursed Yankees!" That at once aroused us. We came to the window in time to hear enough to convince us that this party is a Confederate soldier in disguise. More I have heard from a man known as Battery Bob about a person named Vane Artwell who has caused you a great deal of annoyance. I am glad that I find the opportunity to tell you of him, and his glance rested peculiarly on the disguised lieutenant.

Suddenly he said to that individual:

"You are armed, sir, I presume?"

"What of that?" demanded Artwell, firmly.

"So much, that if you are, and if you know how to use the revolver, you will let me use your kindness to step into the garden with me for a few moments—"

"To be shot down like a dog by you or your Yankee friend there, I suppose," with a ruse.

Denver reddened under the vile insinuation.

But he said, calmly:

"We are not assassins, sir. But you will find me at the garden with me. Or at the fire-eating atmosphere of Virginia, can just as readily avenge the insulting attentions of a man like yourself to the lady who may one day be your wife."

"But you are the lover she spoke about!" cried the lieutenant, with kindling eyes.

A little cry came from Mildred.

"It is he!—it is he!" passed in her mind like a pleasant flash.

"The man was right; this man whom I already admire is Henry Denver."

"Let us not waste words, sir. Will you come into the garden with me? Or at the fire-eating atmosphere of Virginia, can just as readily avenge the insulting attentions of a man like yourself to the lady who may one day be your wife."

"No, no, no. You must not fight!" she pleaded.

"Miss DeKay, I will no longer conceal from you the fact that I am the man for whom you have been searching—the man your dying father wished you to marry. I will be honorable enough to suppose that such an union, forced upon a young lady, who, perhaps, has other views for her future, will be the worst that can befall her."

"But, however, because he has, in my opinion, according to the story of Battery Bob, insulted you; and there could be no firmer person than myself, under the peculiar circumstances of our two lives, to avenge that insult."

"But I have forgotten it. You must not fight him."

"In addition, Miss DeKay, if I fall, you will stand upon my personal papers relinquishing to you the wealth which my father wrongfully withheld from yours. On the whole, if I fall, as I say, it seems to me to be the easiest way out of a dilemma that doubtless, a matter heretofore darkening other prospects in your life."

"No, no, no. You must not fight. I want you to live," she cried.

"The action of her earnest voice seemed to strike him, and he gazed fixedly, inquiringly into her beautiful face, her cheeks flamed with manly blushes, for the first time, and he saw that the girl Mildred more than admired the handsome young officer—she loved him!

This little dialogue and Mildred's action inflamed the heart and brain of the Confederate lieutenant, who saw here before him the man who was the successful rival for possession of the lovely heiress.

His fists clenched together.

"Come, he broke in upon the pair, in a tone that was half hiss and half growl. "I will fight you quickly enough."

"And if he falls, then me," inserted Will Harding, with a significant nod.

"But if you wish to fight, you must."

Again Mildred raised her voice in an effort to dissuade Denver from the duel.

But the young officer had gone too far to retreat, even at the persuasion of the pure and ravishingly beautiful girl who clung to him.

Ethel laid her hand on Mildred's arm, saying:

"If you will allow me, dear Mildred, I would say that Captain Denver cannot now recede from the challenge he has uttered. I also the duello as much as you or any one else does; but I do not see how he can avoid meeting the man who has so much struck me."

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captain whom she felt she could love with all her pure devotion.

"Come!" urged Artwell again.

"I am ready, sir."

Briskly they started toward the veranda, and the two young officers went on.

Mildred turned her head to look paler after them.

"Oh, Ethel, what if he should be killed!"

"Which one?"

"Denver," said Captain Denver. "I tell you, Ethel, I love him, yes, I love him. Oh, if harm should come to him!"

"Let us hope not. I think the captain can take care of himself. And be acted in accordance with my idea of right when he challenged the lieutenant to mortal combat."

"I can never accustom myself to such a bloody war," declared Mildred, half starting toward the veranda to look out upon the combatants.

"But she halted, saying, in a half mean: "No, no, no, I cannot witness it. Let us seek a distance where our ears may not catch the sound of the weapons."

"You are timid—"

"In such a case, yes; for the sound may mean danger to your ears."

"Then he will have the other officer to fight," said Ethel, with firm lips, recollecting the words of Harding.

"They must not, shall not fight. I say they shall not!" cried Mildred with a sudden vehemence.

Before Ethel could divine her companion's intention, the latter had broken away from the lightly ringing hand on her arm and was speeding in the direction of the egress to the garden.

"Mildred—Miss DeKay—come back! Do not interfere!" called Ethel, in pursuit.

But the veranda was empty.

On swiftly went Mildred.

She disappeared amid the dense shadows of the garden.

Reaching the graveled walk, Ethel paused and glanced about her for some sign of the other.

And while she thus stood, there came to her ears the sound of a double report, as of two men firing simultaneously.

Mingling in the explosion was a sharp scream from a woman's startled lips.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SHOT THROUGH THE BRAIN.

Lieutenant Vane Artwell led the way with long and angry strides along the garden path he had so often trod, before his annoyances had resulted in the loss of the beautiful Mildred's friendship.

Eager enough was he for the battle with the young officer, for whom the girl had clung in a way that unmistakably showed her love.

"I shall kill him!" he ground, audaciously, between his gnashing teeth, and with one tight shut as if he felt himself throttling the man he hated with all the intense fire of his Southern blood.

As they progressed toward a suitable spot for the encounter, Will Harding said:

"How will you arrange your weapons? Shall you make your own signs and words, or shall I take that office?"

"Now, though Artwell cherished such hate and animosity for whom the girl had clung in a way that unmistakably showed her love."

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so," was the sharp, though cool remark of Captain Denver.

"Here, I think, is a good place for your amusement, gentlemen," Harding said, pausing at the edge of a copse-like shrubbery, where a faint light entered over the stone wall.

"Yes, this suits me. It does not require much light to wing a Yankee," boasted Artwell.

"How are you to fight? Let me hear your propositions."

"I leave it with this party," said Denver, with a wave of his hand toward the lieutenant.

"You will find me as fair as I am dangerous," Artwell rejoined, now becoming impressed with the coolness of his prospective antagonist.

After a moment's silence, he added:

"I propose that we be placed three paces apart, with backs turned, revolver in each and cocks cocked. This gentleman will count off the words one—two—three—fire! Between the words three and fire, we will turn and commence firing, advancing as we fire, until one or the other is down."

"How many chambers has your revolver?"

"Six," was Denver's quick question.

"Six?"

"Good! So has mine. The terms are agreeable. Proceed."

Harding slowly and precisely measured off the distance and placed the duellists.

"This making a position midway and sufficiently aside to be out of range, he asked:

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"Ready!" came from both in a breath.

With a marked regularity Harding then began his count:

"One—two—three—fire!"

The word fire was drowned upon his lips.

As if on a springy pivot Denver turned, and

his arm turned his revolver flashed in one of those snappish shots that in after years were to make heroes among the Western knights of the pistol.

Almost blending in the whip-like report, Artwell uttered a cry and pitched forward, though his own weapon had sounded so promptly as to seem the instantaneous echo of the other.

On the wintered sword lay the Confederate lieutenant.

Harding advanced toward him.

As he took the step, a woman's scream rang up in the garden near, and Mildred

came running forward.

"He is killed! Oh, he is killed!" she moaned.

"Yes, miss, he is killed—not the one you imagine."

"The other?"

"Lieutenant Artwell lay prone and still."

It had been a wonderful shot, considering the quickness with which it was delivered.

The bullet had crashed fairly through his breast.

Though scarcely two seconds passed before Harding was kneeling at the wounded man's side, life was extinct.

Mildred would know no more of those past annoyances from the fiery and ardent lieutenant.

Denver advanced, with the calm query:

"How is it with him?"

"At sound of Denver's voice, Mildred hurried to his side and grasped him by the arm."

"You are safe. You are not wounded?"

"Not a scratch—thanks to a kind Providence."

"Oh, come away from here."

Harding stepped to Denver's side and whispered something, in reply to which the latter

glanced at his watch.

Then as Harding made off rapidly toward the garden gate, Denver said:

"Come, Miss DeKay, my friend will attend to the body of this man, and I will accompany you for anything so important to say to you, I assure you."

He was very quiet, cool as if nothing had happened to disturb him in the least.

And they moved away in the direction of the house, while that stretched and motionless form lay on the sward, fast growing rigid in the clammy coldness of death.

Half way to the house they encountered Ethel, who had just returned from her walk.

"Oh, Ethel," Mildred cried, tremulously.

"He is safe; it was the other who was killed."

"I have no fear for the safety of Captain Denver," Ethel said, as she joined the girls.

Returning to the parlor, they found Snow standing in the doorway with white eyeballs rolling.

"What has happened?"

"Miss DeKay Mildred! DeKay's been fighting with some kin' in de garden."

"It is all right, Snow. No matter. And Snow, we will not partake of tea yet; maybe in a little while."

"With a sidelong glance at the captain, the negro withdrew."

Having met and known Mildred and Ethel previously, Denver did not feel himself in a position where too much formality was necessary.

He quietly conducted her to a seat and requested, in a low voice, a private interview.

"We are private here," she said, smiling.

"Ethel is the same to me as a sister. We have become that much attached since the night when her father's inn was burned down."

"And the night before last, when you met me, when we first met with you, you may remember."

Glancing at Ethel, he said, half inquiringly:

"Ah, the daughter of the man who was such a determined rebel?"

"My father's heart was always, and strongly, with the South."

"Then I offer you my sympathy and condolences," Miss Cobbs.

"For of course you know that your father is dead?"

"Dead!"

While as the pallor of death grew her face, she said all this interval fought against hope that her father still lived.

The sudden announcement from the Union captain struck like a point into her heart.

Still on the head of the young officer was the shape of the man, and she felt that had robbed him of a lock of hair, of the almost fatal and murderously intended shot from the gun of Silas Cobbs, when he was ascending the stairs of the town to haul down the Confederate flag floating there.

He said, quietly, however:

"Yes, the inn burned down, I believe, while my regiment was halted near, and your father, as is pretty well known, perished in the flames."

Ethel arose. White and weak, she said:

"Excuse me, please."

They looked after the grieving girl in silent sympathy.

When alone, Denver began the task that was the object of this stolen visit to the DeKay mansion.

"Miss DeKay—"

"Will you not call me Mildred?"

"Certainly, if more agreeable to you."

The dark and lustrous eyes were fixed upon him, and Denver thought, at the moment, that he had never beheld one so positively beautiful.

He returned her earnest gaze for a second, while the blood seemed warming within him.

But he remembered the task—perhaps to prove a very unpleasant one—and controlled the passionate emotions that were creeping upon him.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOOD AND WON.

"Will you do me the kindness, Mildred, to fully consider how delicate is the task I have before me as an honorable man and forgive some speeches that may, perhaps, under other circumstances appear rude?"

"Of course," For I am half prepared for what is to come. Proceed, please, and do not forget that I am fully aware of the peculiar relations we bear one another through a fancy of our fathers. So, be perfectly free."

"With that kind assurance, I will."

After a slight pause, he continued:

"You cannot conceive, Mildred, what a shadow of a dark, terrible, and all father's action in the matter of his indebtedness to your father. Instantly upon gaining that knowledge, I exclaimed to him, on his death bed, that I would hasten to make full restitution."

"This sounding he excitedly objected to."

"He showed me a communication from Arnold DeKay, in which that gentleman offered to consider the indebtedness cancelled if, the child, would fulfill the contract of marriage entered into between him and John Denver for the children—yourself and me. The opening of the war prevented my seeking you as early as I proposed, my darling father's will and I may in a measure imagine my feelings when I found my regiment before this town, where I knew you to be abiding. I resolved, while in my lonely tent, to write to you instead of seeking you, and I did so."

"And you have since then been waiting for money owing the estate of your father would be cheerfully paid on your demand. For naturally I supposed that a young lady would scarcely arrive at the age you had, without forming some serious heart attach-

ment; and this supposition strengthened my resolution to restore to you, the child of Arnold DeKay, the sum which was rightfully yours at his death."

"After the meeting of last month, I ascertained that Miss DeKay of Fredericksburg was heart free. It was quite an accident, and of a nature that makes it hardly worth while to recount here. This being the case, however, I formed another determination upon entering Fredericksburg."

"Pardon the interruption. But won't you please tell me how you ascertained the fact that I was heart free? A girl's heart is a very mysterious thing; sometimes even the owner cannot understand it. How could an outsider do so?"

"I will tell you. My informant was Battery Bob. Perhaps you will recall that on one occasion, while knowing him only in his disguise as a clergyman, you confided to him the secret of your life—"

"Never!" she burst forth, in half suppressed astonishment.

"Ah, but you are mistaken."

"I have not the slightest recollection of it."

He smiled.

"It occurred on that day when Battery Bob so opportunely arrived here at your house, to save you from possible insult from the Confederate, Lieutenant Artwell. He overheard you tell Artwell the name of the man to whom you were betrothed and whom you had so lately seen where that man could be found in the ranks of the boys in blue. And he judged by your words that you considered yourself bound by the contract which made you the promised bride of Henry DeKay, and he at least with Henry DeKay should release you."

"I remember now," she murmured, lowly, while her gaze fell.

Denver, in his gladness, said:

"I say I formed another determination after entering the town. That resolution brings me here to-night. I shall obey the request of my father so far as to say, 'Mildred DeKay, I offer you my hand and heart in marriage. Will you accept it? If not, then you must accept the restoration of the money, which I shall always feel is rightfully yours.'"

As he spoke, he arose from his seat beside her and stood with right hand outstretched, gazing at her with perhaps something of suspense in his face.

"As he uttered the words, 'hand and heart,' Mildred's glorious eyes raised quickly and met his."

"You say you offer hand and heart, Captain Denver?"

"Do, earnestly."

"Then I will give you as much as you offer me," she said, rising also and placing one of her warm, dainty hands in his own, while the lustrous orbs sparkled even brighter.

"I accept your offer of marriage, provided you believe sincerely that you can love me without the consideration of the contract which has thus brought us strangely together."

"Mildred, do love me!"

"And I have loved you, Harry, since the first night we met."

Denver's arm was around the beauteous form; he pressed her closely to his breast and impressed on her lips the seal of their mutual admission.

For a brief space silence reigned in the parlor.

To be broken in a manner that happens frequently for such little scenes of bliss.

"Oh, I have loved you, Harry, since the first night we met."

Will Harding had stepped in from the veranda, pausing and bowing with the apology, though his face wore a pleased look at the pretty picture of love upon which he had gazed with such admiration.

"Captain Harding," said Denver, pleasantly, "allow me to introduce to you my future wife, Miss DeKay."

"Miss DeKay," said Harding, in the privilege of this acquaintance, Harding said, advancing and taking the hand promptly extended to him.

Mildred's face was radiant.

Perhaps, for the instant, in the happiness which filled her soul, she had forgot the grieving girl in the upper room.

But the reminder of Ethel came in the appearance of herself at the parlor door just then.

Ethel was still pale, but she had mastered her emotions for the time at least, and had resolved to be with her friend.

Fresh in her recollection of the scene in the garden, at Mildred's invitation, all proceeded

to the dining-hall, where, to tell the truth, Snow had proved himself a host.

For, anticipating that now his young mistress would invite the Union officers in for a repast, he had added to the bountiful spread food here until the most fastidious palate would have been tempted and delighted.

With his white apron switching as he flew around as fast as his legs would permit, he came to the guests and showed them that, if he was old, there was life in the limbs, and a memory of olden days of happy slavery still in his woolly head.

At the conclusion of the refreshment, Mildred could have urged that her visitors remain later.

But Harding took it upon himself to say: "Really, Miss DeKay, I fear it would be very wrong for the guests to linger here. The green companies are being reorganized in view of resuming the attack upon the Confederate stronghold to-morrow, and I have been assigned, even in the brief space of my absence from the garden, to another company. Hardly a score of the brave fellows who followed Captain Denver into battle remain alive—indeed, it is a miracle that either one of us is here alive now—and that fact will probably be absorbed by some other one of the decimated companies of the shattered regiment."

"My friend, Captain Harding, is right," Mildred. Much as I would wish to retain him, I cannot be so absent from the remnant of my company."

"But you will return to me at earliest opportunity, Harry?"

"Of that you may be sure. But remember, a soldier cannot govern his time or place in the slightest manner when in the face of the enemy. If I live I shall see you soon again, I fondly hope."

"If you live! Oh, do not talk in that way."

"Let us not anticipate trouble, Mildred. Farewell, and may Heaven guard you."

"Heaven watch over you, dear Harry," she breathed, earnestly.

And while Harding judiciously turned his back, leading Ethel aside by some commonplace remark, these singularly destined lovers embraced fervently, and there was just the slightest perceptible sound of quick kiss in the air of the illuminated parlor.

Then the two officers took their departure. They went by way of the garden, and though there was no howl now seemed to be no danger in opening the house, Mildred deemed it wiser to have it retain its appearance of being unoccupied until there was a more decisive knowledge of the result of the bloody battle.

The dead body of Lieutenant Artwell had been removed, and was being buried with the many who were being hastily thrown into rude graves on that night. Mildred was preserving him from recognition as a Confederate.

"I love him! I love him!" burst from Mildred, when alone with Ethel in the privacy of her room.

"And I hardly wonder at it. Captain Denver is a brave and noble man, Mildred."

"It seemed to me that all was over too short a time."

"What was over?"

"The wooing."

"He came then as an ardent wooer?"

"In a measure, yes. I saw—or believe I saw—that he loved me; and I—my whole heart has been given to him. I thought before I have thought about him, since your hint that the young Union officer we met that night might be the very man I was searching for. Yes, I love Harry Denver. And I was so precipitate—too quick in accepting the heart and hand he offered me. But I love him, I love him!"

On the face of the beautiful heiress there now was a look that told well the abundance of love she had put into her heart since the moment when handsome Harry Denver asked her to be his bride.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DAY AFTER THE SLAUGHTER.

On their way toward camp Denver and Harding were met by manhandling swiftly through the gloom, who balled:

"Hello, captains, two! Whither away?"

"Battery Bob, is that you?"

"What's left of me, after this little affair to-day?"

Between Denver and the famous spy there had grown up quite an intimacy since the night when Ethel and Mildred had reached the Union lines.

"I have just come from the DeKay mansion," Denver said.

"So? Why are you bound for there now?"

"And perhaps you will find one there you are seeking, unless I am greatly mistaken."

"Ethel Cobbs—is she there?"

The inquiry came eagerly from the lips of Ross.

"I had not seen Ethel since the hour when he left her and Mildred together on the heights to the north of the Rappahannock."

"Yes, she is there."

"And how is she?"

"But excuse us, dear fellow: we are hastening to our regiment—what is left of it, that is."

With which they separated—Battery Bob to be betrothed at the DeKay mansion where he suspected her to be.

A murmur was partly audible within that vast concourse of soldiery that now held the town of Fredericksburg after the carnage of the day.

General Burnside had come down from his headquarters as he learned in quick succession of the defeats and the slaughter into which his strange and sudden march had cast the army; around him were assembled the officers, who, like the weary men, were losing confidence in their leader.

It was an excited council, in which heads more evenly balanced than those of the so far whippersnapper, urged the recrossing of the river before more thousands of the brave boys in blue should fall a sacrifice in a useless attempt to dislodge the enemy from their impregnable crest that stretched their cannon yawning like for miles.

Little sleep came that night for leaders or men.

The morning dawned in space, while the soldiers waited on arms in almost breathless anticipation of a renewal of the terrible scenes through which they had passed by a miracle while their comrades lay piled around in ghastly heaps.

They passed slowly and fraught with an ordeal of suspense that only the soldier on the bloody battlefield can comprehend, especially as they may be, some of those shattered regiments, within a few minutes of the field, or from the improvised hospital where the merciless knives of the surgeons are at the after work of severing mangled limbs or sewing up great gashes in the bodies of the cut and bruised men.

A wonderful change had come over the little town in that short time.

People were shrinking in their cellars; the streets, save for the presence of the Federal soldiery, moving here and there in weary patrol, were deserted; and at various points reared the ruins of the buildings that had fallen in the early bombardment from Stafford Heights.

When morning came, it found the two leaders, chiefs of two brave hosts facing one another from across the bloody field—one hesitating to advance upon the heights that were fast such lurid and death, the other, unaware of the actual losses of the Unionists, preferring to remain in that position which the direful panorama of the previous day had shown him to be very dangerous.

On this day the boys learned that to brave Sumner they owed that surprising delay in the expected order which could have only meant the rendering up uselessly of more lives, the shedding of more precious blood.

No crows were they, these tired and disheartened troops.

But the simplest private may see, after such an experience as the army of the Potomac had then and on other fields, that they are yielding up themselves to slaughter with no outcome but defeat, no comforting assurance in their last moments that their lives have not been given in vain.

To the voice of Sumner, raised nobly in protest against a further sacrifice, they owed the respite which came and lasted through the hours of that day.

At night again, though they still rested on their

arms, not knowing how soon the bugles might sound them "in," or their equally disheartened officers command and lead them up to the mark of doom.

Some of the citizens, emboldened by rumors that the Yankee army had been badly whipped, they would not remain long on that side of the Rappahannock, came forth, and others opened their houses as if in no dread of this blue-clad foe whom they hated as intensely as the boys of the Confederacy who were on the distant crest.

Under such circumstances it was not to be wondered at that there were occasional scenes of violence committed by the boys in blue, huted as they were by the recent strife and galled by the semblance of defeat.

And one of these scenes happened at the mansion of Mildred DeKay, where the young heiress had thrown open her house, welcoming to accept the shelter of the Federal troops must cross back over the river, and astonishing her neighbors by placing over the doorway a pair of small flags of silken stars and stripes.

"I feared that you had acted a little unwisely, Mildred," was Ethel's opinion, in reference to this display.

"And why, pray? Are not the troops of the North in full possession of Fredericksburg?"

"True, for the present—"

"And I am sure they will not retreat from it," the Southern girl broke in, impulsively.

"Be not too sure. The loss of the Potomac, sustained by the men of the North, may mean a retreat."

"I will not believe it."

Ethel regarded her companion inquisitively.

"You are a strange girl, Mildred."

"In what way?"

"That you, who were born on the sacred soil of Virginia, should throw all your sympathies in the direction of the Federal army from a claim shared by your relatives and friends."

"And in that, do I differ much from another whom I love dearly," she added, advancing toward the girl, Ethel, to whom the closing remark was applied.

"But I am the child of the hills; my whole spirit might naturally follow where my heart is captive. In loving Battery Bob I placed my whole trust."

"And I," for a second time interrupted Mildred, "have done the same with Captain Denver. He seems to be as gentle as a child, honorable, no woman can doubt, and I have written him a letter to account the man who was growing to be the bane of my life."

Mildred halted paused in her speech.

For at that instant, a low murmur of the night wind came a strange sound of men's voices.

Mildred stepped to the window—curtains and peered forth.

"Oh, Ethel!"

"What is it?"

"The crowd of men on the pavement right before the house; they appear to be Federals."

Ethel reached the other's side.

As the curtains were drawn a little further apart, the two girls were partly revealed to those below, who seemed to be wrangling about something concerning the mansion.

One of the men raised and shook his fist at the window, and those who were in the pines, while his voice arose above those of his companions, saying:

"Ya-as, you rebs in thar, you think you kin hoodwink us by that pair of flimsy flags in 'over the door. But I tell you the true blue you make out to be, we'll soon know. Come on, boys, inter the shebang, an' let's see if they'll treat us as we fellers ought to be treated."

To that there was evidently an objection.

And the cause of the wrangling was that some were for entering and gutting the mansion on the theory that the display of the flags was but a sham, while others, on the level-headed and those who were against such a proceeding on the forethought that they might be called to stern account by their officers.

The riotous element prevailed, however, and presently the men were watching a half-battered flag ascend the steps and begin a hammering on the great door.

At the same instant Snow came with a rap at the door of the chamber.

His eyelids were rolled into a considerable fright as he announced the disturbance below.

Mildred could not conceal that she was startled.

But the child of the hills, brave and lovely Ethel, took it upon herself to say:

"Let them in, Snow—every one. Hasten

before they batter down and ruin the door."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ETHEL AT BAY AGAIN.

We have seen the extraordinary courage possessed by Ethel Cobbs when she met and halted the troopers on the stairway of her father's inn.

Another opportunity seemed to beat hand, in which she might again give an exhibition of nerve.

She observed the half startled hesitation of her companion, and uttered calmly those words which caused the negro's eyes to roll still wider, and Mildred to exclaim:

"Ethel!—no, you surely would not advise admitting those brawlers below?"

"You will find that you cannot keep them out of them, in them, say I, and I will attend to them."

"You?"

"Why, yes. Do you suppose I fear a few half drunken wretches such as they are? And they presume me too hard, I will show them how a Virginia girl can use the pistol."

And again to Snow she said:

"Hurry down and admit them. I will attend to the rest. Do not be alarmed. I have dealt with headstrong men before."

Mildred made no further objection.

There was something in the calm demeanor, the stary eyes of the child of the hills that inspired a quick confidence.

There was a wave of her hand, she signified to Snow that Ethel's order should be obeyed.

"What do you intend to do when they have entered?" she asked.

"Meet them face to face," was the firm response. "Come, if you wish to see my action."

In silence and wonderment, Mildred followed the erect and confident girl from the room, and they descended the stairs a little way in the rear of Snow.

"I am sure you that you were acting rather unwisely in placing those flags at the front door. Those men believe it to be a sham; and were they Confederates, you would have even more trouble than you are now brewing."

The clamor at the door grew louder.

The suspicious soldiers found the great panels not so easily battered down as they had expected.

Some had brought heavy stones from the street and were banging furiously at the stout oak, while the shouts of all, in mingled curses, was sufficient to have startled the nerves of a person less brave than Ethel Cobbs.

"Open the door," she commanded, to Snow, as the negro, with hands on the huge bolts, half hesitated ere admitting a gang like that which raised such a disturbance on the outside.

"Snow gave the bolt a wrench and then fled from the vicinity of the door as it swung open and the soldiers came pitching inward, with a shout of triumph.

"You can't fool us with no such shenanigans as them flags!" cried the foremost, as he made toward the stairs.

"And the rough voice of another:

"I'll bet it's a nest of secessionists, and the sooner we clean it out the better."

"Eh!" rung a sharp command.

On the girl's voice was that, but its accent checked the jostling crowd of men suddenly, and they stared at her as if astounded by her temerity.

"Then?"

"Now, now, look there. Wot a beauty she is, boys; an' the little gal says as how we must bait, and the ruffian ended his speech in a coarse guffaw.

"What do you want?" demanded Ethel.

"What we want is to see just wot kind of a shebang this here is. 'Cause we don't take no stock in them flags wot you've got a hangin' out there; it's humbug, an' we know it."

"Leave this house!"

"Wot!"

The leader, threw back his head and gaped at her, as if he was not sure of having heard aright.

"Where this house, instantly, or I warn you, you will wish you had never entered it."

"Look here, gal," at the same time advancing upon the fair girl who stood a few steps into the hall.

"Halt!" again came the warning voice.

At the same instant her revolver leaped into her hand, ready cocked and leveled steadily at the breast of the man.

"Say, wot you mean, an' show?"

"I mean that I shall give you and your

crew just one minute to get out of this house. At the expiration of that time I shall commence firing. I am a pretty good shot, as you will find; and even if I was not I guess my six bullets will find some mark in a crowd of men jammed as closely as you are."

There were a few who held the same opinion, and evinced it by promptly skulking to the rear.

In reality they feared the girl more than they would a man, because they realized that she felt herself outraged by such an intrusion, and would most assuredly empty her revolver into their midst.

"I ain't takin' no gal's pills in mine just about now," uttered one, as he drew away toward the door.

"Nor me, neither," chimed another wary fellow, with a sidelong glance at the gleaming tube that was pointed so directly at them.

But the leader did not flinch.

He was one of those bulldog fellows sometimes found in armies, who may have no record for bravery, which is really no more than an ignorant disregard for danger.

"Hanged if I'll be stopped by a gal; you hear me?"

"Back, sir! Not one step more, on your life—"

"Bah!"

He made toward her briskly, with one hand half raised, as if he would boldly snatch the weapon from the girl's grasp.

As he placed one foot on the lower step there was a flash of fire, a sharp report, and—thuck!

The bullwhip his arms into the air and reeled backward.

"Come on, scoundrels!" defied Ethel, as the others, who I promised you that you would find me a good and a prompt shot. Who is next?"

A growl of rage went up as they saw their comrade fall, evidently dead, before the brave girl.

But the hot reception showed them that she would prove a Tartar to deal with; some already left the house and sought a safe place of observation around the massive jamb; and the rest, with a final glance at the dead body of their leader, hastened out.

To expedite their departure, Ethel fired again, the barrel of her weapon was raised in the air intentionally.

Believing that she was about to keep up a regular fusillade, their pace quickened to a scrambling run, and before the insolent had fully escaped the last man of the cowardly gang was outside.

Here, however, they met with another reception that was unexpected and summary.

A patrol had halted on the pavement.

"A guard!" was the voice said:

"Secure those men!"

The voice of Captain Denver.

Mildred recognized it at once and ran past Ethel toward the door, just as the captain entered with the inquiry:

"What is going on here? Mildred, what has happened?"

A few words told all.

Immediately turning to the patrol, he ordered:

"Keep those fellows fast; I want to have them dealt with."

While he was exchanging a few more words with Mildred, one of his men came to the door, saying:

"Captain, this house is afire."

And their attention thus called to it, all then detected a smell of smoke ascending from some unknown source.

A hurried investigation revealed that it came from the veranda at the rear.

Some one of the rowdy gang that had clamored for admittance shortly before, had gone around to the rear. Effecting an entrance, he had witnessed the checking of his comrades by the brave Ethel, and in chagrin and consciousness had, with the aid of a few cartridges and a match, ignited the frail frame-work of the veranda, which had burned up to too great a headway to be extinguished when discovered at last.

A sudden gust tore the house, Denver said, "If you have anything to save, Mildred, you had best hurry about it and get away from the premises."

Calling in three of his men, while the rest remained guarding the arrested predators, all went to work with a will to rescue from the fast creeping flames whatever Mildred indicated as worthy of preservation.

By the time the few goods were removed to a safe spot, the tongue of fire had communicated to the main portion of the building, and the thick smoke began to roll out

from the upper windows in suffocating billows.

At this juncture there was a new-comer on the scene.

A patrol officer, with the straps on his shoulder to indicate him to be a lieutenant of artillery.

Battery Bob.

He joined the girls, and was at first unobscured by Denver, who was busy giving instructions to the sergeant of the patrol.

The sergeant started away with his prisoners, and Denver turned, to be surprised by seeing the spy in this new guise in conversation with the two.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PEACE AT LAST.

"Hello, Battery Bob! What's this?" with a smiling glance at the uniformed spy. "Another of your disguises?"

"Oh, no, captain, it isn't a disguise at all. I have held my commission in the artillery all along; but my work has been of the character you know of, for there I could do even more good. But since my mission as a spy only extended from the Auticam to Fredericksburg, a locality I knew like a book, I have returned to my post among the men."

Denver grasped his hand warmly.

The burning house did not attract much attention.

The citizens of the town had seen too much of flames among the dwellings since the Union army appeared on the banks of the Rappahannock to be excited over this small conflagration, and the Federal soldiery was held closely to their camps on this night, when it was commonly rumored that Burnside had resolved to cross back over the river, where he could plant his guns and still menace the town and adjacent plains.

The next question was what to do with the girls?

Battery Bob solved this by the suggestion that they proceed at once toward the north, accompanied by Snow; and when the plan was fully discussed, Ross, who had leave for a short time, started to conduct them to the river, where they were soon being ferried across.

Clouds were gathering fast in the heavens. Ross urged that they lose no time in gaining a safe shelter ere the coming storm broke upon them.

On the north bank of the stream he procured horses for the two girls and the faithful negro, and after an affectionate parting with Ethel and a godspeed for Mildred, he stood for a long time watching their receding forms on the road leading to Falmouth.

"I cannot go on without first pausing to take a look at the ruins at my old home," Ethel said, as they drew near the slope upon which she had been reared in childhood.

"But it can only result in increasing your sadness," Mildred demurred. "And see—the storm will soon come, and we have far to ride before we can shelter ourselves and our horses."

But Ethel was firm.

Mildred could not continue her objections, and the trio presently emerged upon the side fork of the road and ascended to the ruins of Cobbs'.

Black and foreboding were those ruins now; and the tears involuntarily came into Ethel's eyes as she thought of the charred remains of one who had always been a kind father to her, and now lying unrecognizable amid the debris.

As they were about to move away at last, they were arrested by a whining sound near by.

"Ah, a dog," Mildred exclaimed, with a shudder.

"And I think I know that whine," said Ethel.

Then she called, coaxingly:

"Come here, Dug!"

Out from the gloom toward them slowly came the blind hound.

She leaned down from her saddle and gently stroked the back of the beast with the handle of her riding whip; and Durga seemed to be overjoyed, he recognized the voice of the one who had first been his benefactor after the encounter which resulted in the loss of his eyes.

"Halt! Some one is coming!"

Hoofbeats sounded on the road a short distance below.

A rider was approaching the spot of the ruins.

"Let us fly," Mildred urged.

"No, I wish to see who it may be."

They wheeled their horses to face the comer.

Durga uttered a low growl and imitated the act of the girls, while his great nozzle snuffed high in the air.

"After other moments, a huge horse with a herculean rider burst into view from the gloom.

"Halt! Who are you?" rung Ethel's voice.

"No, blast it! there is the daughter of old Silas, as I live!"

The giant lieutenant, Rory Bolt.

And he called:

"You that you, charming Miss Ethel?"

"Yes, it is I, Rory Bolt. What brings you here?"

"To see your father, fair Miss Ethel, and a child I have had of it coming around the Yankee pickets."

"You will not see my father, Rory Bolt."

"But it is important."

"Look!"

She pointed toward the ruins.

"Eh! Why, blast it, the old thing's burnt down, isn't it? But I must see your father, all the same, Miss Ethel."

"You are a fool, dead and charred, in the midst of those ruins. And as it is impossible for you to see him, you may as well turn about and make your way back to the Confederate lines, if you are smart enough."

"Yes, your father is dead, you say?"

"Yes."

"And you are now without a protector," continued the burly lieutenant, in a changed and peculiar voice.

"I am not in need of one; I think I can protect myself all that is necessary."

"But you are a young and very beautiful lady, Miss Ethel, and it is a raw pity that you should be roaming around the country without an anchoring plan, without a husband to look after you, now that your old father is dead—"

"Sir!"

"Yes, you hear me, I guess, Miss Ethel. I am very much in earnest. I am in love with you; have admired you ever since you were hardly bigger than a kitten. But, blast it! I never dared to say so before, because that kind of yours was worse than a mad bloodhound when he got on a rampage, and he would have fanged me smartly if I had hinted at the affection which I now swear I entertain for you. Don't you think I will make a very good protector, charming Miss Ethel."

"I think that if you continue this insult a moment longer, I shall bore your ugly carcase with a spear," cried Ethel, sharply, and drawing her revolver, unseen, as she began to anticipate trouble with the monstrous ruffian.

Bolt gave his horse a touch, and drew near.

"Keep back there," warned the girl.

"But I want to talk with you, my dear Miss Ethel. I want to tell to you, to swear to you, that I love you more than any other."

"Back, sir!"

"Blast it, you are too full of airs, I think." "As surely as you advance another yard, as surely will you die!" came again from the compressed lips of her hand, as she cocked the weapon in her hand.

But the passion that Rory Bolt had so long held in check, which had been of Ethel's father, and which he now boldly avowed, consumed him beyond all control.

He dug the spur into his horse and made a dash toward her.

In the same instant that the horse pranced forward, a large, dark and heavy body shot through the air in the course of an arc and straight toward the mounted man.

The bound had closely located the rider.

Ere Bolt could realize just what it was that came toward him through the air, he was struck by a powerful body, and a set of terribly sharp teeth fastened fairly on his throat.

The cry of dismay, positive terror, that rose to his lips, was choked back by the powerful gripe of those relentless jaws.

The blood spurted from the lacerated flesh in streams.

He snatched one of his revolvers from his belt and fired into the beast's body, with the muzzle pressing the hairy side.

There was a horrible, tearing bullet that entered the vitals of the dog; but the terrible fangs did not relax.

Durga held fast while he died there, and the weight of the animal dragged Bolt from his horse in a heap on the ground.

The dead dog was still at his throat.

Strive as he might and did with all his gigantic strength he could not cast off that death grip.

And even if he could have succeeded it was

too late to save himself—the great artery of his neck was completely torn asunder, and he reeled over in his gushing blood that dyed the road.

Nor could the doomed man utter a sound even to tell of the agony and dread that there and then came into body and soul.

Before the night the night became darker before his vision as the red tide flowed.

The girls watched the horrible struggle of man and beast with an involuntary shuddering.

And when at last Bolt ceased his vain struggle and lay in a quivering heap, Ethel, the more nerved of the two, dismounted and went to his side.

"He is dead, and so is Durga," she said, presently.

Then she continued, returning back to her horse:

"Come, Mildred—on! On to the clime of the North!"

They wheeled and dashed away from the spot, turning the heads of their horses again northward along the road and soon leaving Palmonth far in their rear.

Another day came and found the armies of the North and the South still occupying their respective positions on the plains and crests of Fredericksburg.

The storm of that winter's day broke upon them in its violence, to make everyone dread a contemplation of the ghastly surroundings.

It was now the turn of the elements; and they waged fiercely through the somber skies.

When nightfall drew down again, the movement of retreat began along the Federal line.

They crossed the Rappahannock—crossed at first and proudly through penitents of blood—went the blue host, discouraged and partly demoralized by what could not be recognized as less than a severe defeat, after that sacrifice of thousands of brave souls.

Far away from the sound of war that still awoke the echoes of the hills at the bloody Rappahannock, Mildred and Ethel waited patiently for their brave lovers exposed to danger and carnage; and frequently to them came some scant intelligence of the daring young artillery lieutenants and the brave Captain Harry Denver.

Through many battles that followed before these two gallant lovers could seek their sweethearts at the North at the expiration of their term of service, the names of Ross and Denver earned more than one mention of commendation from their superior officers.

Letters to the girls came as if in answer to their constant prayers for their lovers' safety; and, finally, came the Federal capital, they being on their way to the Federal capital to make good their vows, their allegiance to another cause than that of Uncle Sam—the cause of love.

In those busy war times at the city of Washington there was a brilliant double wedding, and the career of Battery Bob, as such, ended when he led fair Ethel to the rosy altar of Hymen.

The four, Durga and his bride, Mildred, and Ross, with his bride, Ethel, entered upon a mutually happy life from that date; and whenever the two heroes talked of the difficult days that had passed, they thanked the gods of the late war, they fervently thanked Heaven for its kindness in preserving them from death and giving them the joys that filled their homes as reward for past deeds of valor.

[THE END.]

THROUGH DEATH TO LIBERTY.

BY A DOCTOR.

The morning of October 12 I was taken—

together with several others who had represented themselves as soldiers, to the hospital building one block below Libby and across the street from it, where we were consigned to the fifth story. I think there were sixteen of us.

We were all duly as prisoners. The business of the forenoon and afternoon being "skirmishes for graybacks," the cracks in the floors and the woodwork above and in front of the crevice being alive with them.

October 22 a call was made for volunteers to go to do duty in some of the prison hospitals.

I volunteered to go, and was sent to Hospital No. 1, which was the headquarters of the Medical Director of the army, and where the director himself stayed at nights.

The second night, October 23, a soldier was brought in who had been wounded in the arm and chest, and was in a very bad way.

Aputation had been recently performed, but owing to want of proper care the parts were sloughing, gangrene was threatened, the limb was protruding, and the sight was sickening.

The chief warden, Martin H. Howard, called me and begged me to go and see what could be done. I dressed and went and took the boy into the operating room, which was some tissue left, healthy enough to risk another flap, and that what was done must be done quickly.

I went to Surgeon Wilkin's quarters, called him up, stated my case, and he wanted an amputating case, etc. He questioned me as to my identity, and gave me an order on the steward for whatever I wanted. I got it, and took the boy into the operating room, which was some tissue left, healthy enough to risk another flap, and that what was done must be done quickly.

October 24, Surgeon Wilkin sent for me and requested me to go to Hospital No. 21, and take general charge.

There were three rebel doctors assigned to this hospital, who came, or were to come, every morning, go through the different wards and prescribe for the patients.

Prescriptions were written in a book, with the number of bed, section and ward, and these were carried to the patients' wards, as soon as ready, go to No. 19, always accompanied by an escort, hand them to the steward, and then sit down or go about the hospital until the medicines were ready. I then would take the boy to the operating room, and back; sometimes the escort would stop to gossip with his comrades, but I would keep on alone.

Adjusting the yard in which was the hospital was a nice, hospitable-looking cottage, which set back from the sidewalk about eight or ten feet, and had a picket fence in front.

When going to my hospital with the medicines, if I was alone, unaccompanied by any guard, I was always met at the gate of this cottage by a young miss of sixteen or seventeen—she was a nurse, and had a package to me, which I dropped into the "dead-end." These packages contained some delicacy for the sick—a jar of preserves, some dried fruit, some jelly, or something.

I was an inveterate smoker in those days, and always had my pipe in my mouth when going to and from the dispensary.

On the afternoon of December 7, at two o'clock, as I passed the young lady, being alone, she handed me a package which I thanked her for.

When I arrived at my room I took it from the pillowcase and found it to be a handsome silk tobacco pouch, cord and tassels, and filled with fine smoking tobacco. I also found a piece of paper in it—a note, saying:

"Soldier of the United States army, meet me in this back yard at eight o'clock to-night, and I will conduct you to the dead-end."

As I raised my eyes from my billet dux I saw the nurses carrying a dead soldier past my door to the dead-house, and the thought struck me that I had better not go. I tried to get on them and I will make a trial of it. I summoned the chief wardmaster, H. Howard, and told him to bring three others, reliable men; that I wanted them to carry me to the dead-house.

Within ten minutes I was in the coffin, in the dead-house, which was outside the hospital yard and in a lumber yard, and the cover placed over the coffin.

There I lay, afraid to stir, fearing that if a squad of men came with another corpse, they not knowing of my ruse, might give an alarm, hence the necessity of remaining in my voluntary prison.

Occasionally I would raise the lid and place it on one side for ventilation, but replace it as soon as footsteps were heard.

Imagine my surprise when, early next day, fifty-three corpses brought out and placed in their boxes up to seven o'clock.

As I heard the city clock strike the hour of half-past seven, I quietly pushed aside the lid, and raised myself as quietly as possible, and found myself in a very bad way, and a difficult thing to do in view of having been confined four and three-quarter hours, and being more dead than when placed there; but having been so long alive with them, stretched my weary limbs, flexed and con-

tracted my muscles, stepped to the door to reconnoiter, found only a board placed against it to prevent it from blowing open, gently pushed against the door till I could reach out my arm and take hold of the piece of board, moved it to one side, and peered toward the hospital yard.

The guard had gone to the lower end of his beat.

I stepped out, closed the door, placed its spring against it, and stealthily went down into the corner of this lumber-yard to where there was a brick negro hut, which belonged to and was in the hospital yard, the only one of which looked out into this lumber-yard. There were two windows looking out toward me from this hut, and as I wished to get a suit of gray, which I had had made by the negroes in the hut, out of a pair of old breeches, I went into the hut, and when the guard had again passed down his beat, I tapped on the window, and immediately the sash went up and a man's head popped out. My heart went down into the toes of my trousers.

I thought it was the officer of the guard who had been watching my movements, and also thought the negroes had betrayed me, but my heart soon jumped up to its normal sphere when a voice from the head said:

"Is that you, Doc?"

"Yes. Who are you?" says I, in reply.

"It's Harry," my reliable old wardmaster, a black man about six feet in his stockings and a heart in proportion.

He passed out my clothes and I doffed the old and put on the new, and passed the old ones in for the negroes to dispose of.

Harry then came out and we stole to the rear of the lumber-yard, which looked out upon an alley.

This was the only way we could get out unobserved.

We scaled the fence, went to the front street, and came to the little alley leading to the back yard of the cottage.

The moon was shining brightly and we found the place of hiding in the yard, and took refuge in the out-house.

While there the little lady came out and looked around, but it was not eight o'clock yet, and we remained in hiding.

Harry then came in the house, and soon the city clock struck eight, and guards halted:

"Eight o'clock, post No. 9, and all's well."

Soon the door opened, and out came our little angel. I stepped forward toward her, when she sprang and threw herself in my arms. I told her of my companion, and she said, "All right. I wish there were more."

She then stated she did not live there, was only visiting there each day; the gentleman was her uncle, and as she had not told any of them of what she had done, she would go back and prepare to go home. Her uncle would accompany her; she would go out of the front gate, and when we heard her say, "Good-night," we should come out in the street and follow them. She would have a white handkerchief in her hand, and this we were to follow until she gave the command to halt. We were told to the other side of the city, and when they came to a halt, we, being about fifty feet in the rear, also halted. We had many zig-zags, because the gentleman knew where guards were placed, and crossed and recrossed streets many times to relieve us from embarrassments, we not having the counter-signal.

He then turned toward us and said you may advance, put out his hand and gave us a cordial shake, then said:

"This piece of work by the lady has taken me by surprise, and while she has been successful in this, I am afraid she will get herself and her friends into trouble. She is too impulsive."

"I can make no preparations to-night for your safe hiding. You will of necessity have to go into her father's house, and remain for to-night, and perhaps longer, till I can, after consulting with the officers of the Union

League, which we have in the city and throughout the South, and a place can be prepared for you. I think you will be safe for several of the night."

We then went into the house, partook of a good supper, and were assigned to a bed—oh! such a heaven, such a reaction from what had been.

About nine o'clock the next morning, December 8, the gentleman came and brought a copy of the *Richmond Sentinel*, which contained an account of our escape, particularly mine, headed "A Yankee Trick," with a full description of us.

The undertaker had gone to the hospital at two o'clock in the morning to get the dead bodies reported by the officer of the guard. He sent a message to Captain Turner, the provost-marshal, who went there with his clerk, and they proceeded to call the roll.

The sergeant-major of the Seventy-eighth Pennsylvania Infantry, who was jealous for the position of chief ward master, gave the whole thing away to Captain Turner.

The night of December 9, 1863, we were escorted by the gentleman who occupied the cottage beside the hospital to a farmhouse, about eight miles into the country north, where we were given quarters in the loft of a carriage-house.

This carriage-house was filled with straw in its lower story, and the loft being floored, we had an opportunity to tramp and keep up exercise.

There was a window from this loft, both front and back, protected by shutters inside, so that we could look out over the country and go up and down the road, and could see any troopers coming. We worked three times a day by the proprietor of the farm, he bringing our meals in a basket. The weather was extremely cold, but we had burrowed a hole for ourselves in the straw below, and during the nights we managed to keep warm.

We always took reliefs of sleeping, one remaining awake to guard against alarm or surprise from the enemy.

Through the gentleman I opened correspondence with the Hon. John Miner Botts, with a view of obtaining a pass from the Confederate States officers of the War. Secretary of War, and on December 15 I placed in the hands of this gentleman some greenbacks for the purpose above stated, and December 16 he brought me a pass for myself and my comrade. I also had him engage a hack for \$30, Confederate money, to convey us to the ferry at the Rappahannock, called Sandy, and owned by a man of that name.

The afternoon, just dusk, of December 17, we went in a brief conversation to the man's residence, partook of supper, and washed and shaved ourselves. I then wore my beard full. I shaved off my mustache and beard, leaving only side whiskers, and at six o'clock the hack drove up to the door. We made a hearty good-bye to our benefactors, and started, oh! with what feelings. We had many dangers to encounter, but we were resolved to obtain our liberty. We arrived at a country tavern about ten o'clock, where the driver proposed to stay till morning. We got supper, and had just stepped outside the house when another hack drove up, containing a gentleman dressed in the uniform of a United States officer, with a captain's shoulder-straps, accompanied by two ladies—one his wife and the other a nurse—and two children.

The captain and I saluted each other, engaged in a brief conversation, and I learned he was not a United States soldier.

This was only a disguise. He was running the blockade to Baltimore; was intending to place his family there for safe keeping till the close of the war, and from my driver I learned his name was Captain Moffet, and that he was an officer on General Winder's staff, Winder being the commandant of the Post of Richmond.

I called up my comrade, and we went to the stables and found our driver and ordered him to drive us at once to the Rappahannock.

He demurred, but a pistol to his ear and a five-dollar greenback in his hand prevailed, and at one o'clock on the morning of December 18 we were knocking at the door of the hotel owned by the man Sandy. His colored clerk opened for us.

I ordered hot punches, freely stuffed the clock, and got him to call the ducky who ran the ferryboat over.

When he came in I gave him several hot punches, and got him to get the ferry ready, and we embarked.

The water was high and the current swift, and much ice made it hard work, but at daylight we landed on the opposite shore, and on neutral ground.

We learned from the ducky that his master had only one team for the purpose of conveying passengers from the Rappahannock to the Potomac, and we engaged it then and there.

As soon as we landed he hitched up the mules, and we started. When about four miles on our route, just at a cross-roads, where there was a sort of a village or a business place belonging to a planter, consisting of a blacksmith shop, mill, etc., we were overtaken by a man on horseback, the master of our driver and owner of the hotel and ferry, the same Sandy who was a C. S. detective.

He secured our team, told us that there were five other passengers who wished to go to the Potomac, and as he had only the one team and wagon we would have to dismount and wait till the driver went back for them. As there was no other alternative without trouble, we got out and went up to where an old ducky had a fire built and was boiling tar, where we warmed ourselves and got what information we could from the man as to shortest routes to where certain darkeys lived.

Just then a gentleman in full Confederate uniform came riding down the cross roads, who the ducky informed was his master, and that it was the provost-marshal of that district, but that he had no soldiers under him.

In a short time my comrade and I filled and lighted our pipes and started to walk on, while this officer rode up to us, saluted, and said he would like to see our passes. I asked him who he was, and to show me his appointment of power, which he withdrew from his breast pocket and showed me. It exhibited our passes, when he thanked me, and turned and joined this Sandy, whom he had left to halt us, and as he joined him he said:

"They are all right, and their passes are good."

So then we walked on, passed the mill, and were soon hidden from their view. We met a ducky, who seemed intelligent, and he gave us a great deal of information, which enabled us to shorten our distance to the point at the Potomac where we wished to go.

We arrived at the house of the first blockade runners, whose name was given us, but he was out; had gone across the river four days before, and his wife feared for his safety.

We secured lodging with her for the night, and the next morning she directed us to a colored man, who was home, and who was a successful blockade runner, and said we might engage him, using her name.

We sought him and secured him for the sum of fifty dollars in greenbacks.

Head winds were against any attempt to cross, but the night of December 20 we started and at midnight landed safely on the Maryland shore at a point near Leonardtown, and were rowed by another party to the town, where we took a government boat to Washington, arriving there the morning of Christmas Day, reported in person to Secretary Stanton, who called in General Halleck and General Thomas, got a letter to pass the guard, admitting me into the presence of President Lincoln and his amiable, motherly wife, and then I realized I was again free."

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